

**Public Awareness of,
Participation in,
and Opinions about
Fishing Tournaments in Wisconsin**

By Jordan Petchenik

**Bureau of Science Services
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**

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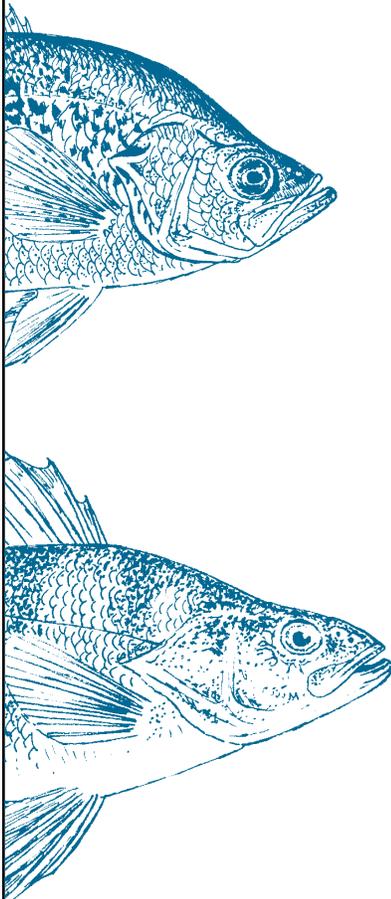
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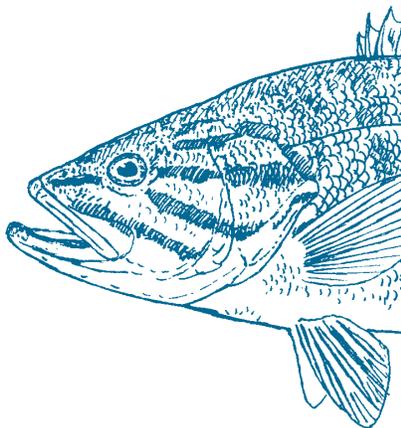
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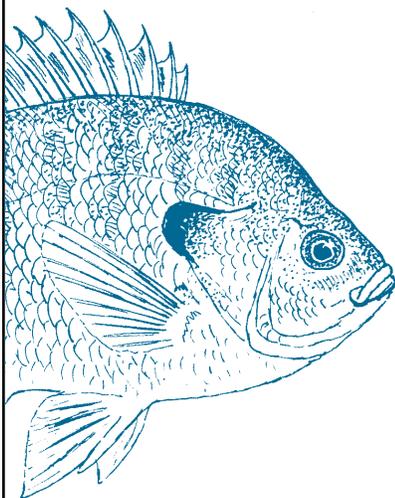
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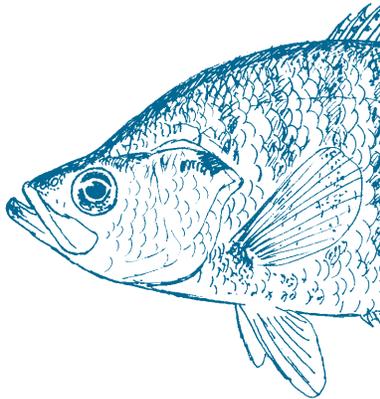


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Introduction and Research Highlights

This report was written to inform policy makers on the public's opinions on various aspects surrounding tournament fishing in Wisconsin. Specifically, the report examines the public's awareness and acceptance of tournament fishing, their beliefs about tournament-related fish mortality, the impact tournaments have on the fishery resource as well as on water recreation, the public's acceptance of or opposition to culling in tournaments, and the possible benefits derived from fishing tournaments.

The results of this study were based on input from two quantitative and two qualitative endeavors. The first quantitative study was a random sample of 1,000 Wisconsin anglers. Each angler received a 12-page questionnaire in the mail, and after a maximum of three contacts, 63% returned usable questionnaires. The second quantitative study was a random sample of 1,000 Wisconsin registered boaters that received a four-page questionnaire in the mail. After a maximum of three contacts, 67% returned usable questionnaires. The qualitative components included three focus groups with bass tournament participants and in-depth interviews with 14 waterfront property owners and/or members of a lake association.

To anticipate the detailed findings of the Results and Discussion section, three major findings followed by eight secondary findings are presented here.



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Major Finding #1.

Anglers, in general, do not support culling in tournaments.

Approximately one-half (51%) of all anglers do not support culling in tournaments even with live-well restrictions. Anglers with tournament experience are just as opposed to culling as are anglers without tournament experience.

Results from focus groups with tournament participants do not concur with survey results—the participants believe culling is a necessity for tournament expansion. Further, they believe that culling results in less harm to the fishery resource than does catch-and-keep fishing practiced by so many non-tournament anglers.

It's possible these opposing results can be explained by a specialization continuum found in many outdoor pursuits. It's likely that very few, if any, respondents to the questionnaires were as highly specialized in their fishing development as were the participants in the tournament focus groups. Questionnaire respondents, even those who reported they had experience with tournament fishing, more likely represent the general angling public. Participants in the tournament focus groups, however, participate in a highly specialized form of fishing. Being allowed to cull would allow tournament anglers to further advance in their angling specialization.

Another plausible explanation for the opposing results is probably linked to opportunities to cull. If a slight majority of all anglers believe that culling does “no” or “little” harm to the fishery resource then why are they opposed to culling? The hypothesis would be that general anglers believe they will never have the required equipment (i.e.,

live-wells) to legally cull. If they cannot cull, why should other anglers with better, more advanced equipment, be allowed to cull?

Major Finding #2.

Results of the biological assessment of culling must be communicated to the public.

If the biological assessment of culling and tournament fishing is positive, meaning harm to the fishery resource was not found, those results must be widely communicated with the angling public and with waterfront property owners.

Analyses reveal that respondents' beliefs about the potential harm to fishery resources due to tournament fishing is a likely influence on their beliefs about culling and other tournament aspects. Those who believe that tournaments "moderately" or "greatly" harm the fishery resource are more likely to oppose culling even with live-well standards than those who believe the resource has had "no" or a "little" harm. Further, they are less likely to speculate that a high percentage (75% to 100%) of tournament caught and released fish will survive than those who believe the resource will experience "no" or a "little" harm.

Major Finding #3.

Tournament anglers and general anglers agree on several key issues pertaining to tournaments and culling.

Tournament anglers and general anglers did not differ in their opinions of when tournaments should be prohibited (holiday weekends), of whether or not culling should be allowed (51% oppose), the survival rate of fish caught and released during a culling tournament (29% believe that 75% or more of the fish caught and released will survive at least one day although 63% believe an acceptable survival rate would be at least 75%), the

potential harm to the fishery resource due to tournaments (about one-quarter of all anglers believe tournaments cause a "moderate" or "great deal" of harm), and their opinions of potential economic and tourism benefits resulting from tournaments. These similarities mean that policy makers are primarily dealing with a single population of anglers, rather than an angling public with diverse and opposing opinions.

Secondary Findings

1. Tournament fishing is not widely practiced. Fewer than one angler in five (17%) said he or she participated in some kind of fishing tournament.
2. Fishing tournaments do not go unnoticed by other anglers. Approximately one-half of all anglers said that being on the water as a non-participant during a tournament affected the quality of their fishing experience (52%); a nearly equal proportion said the tournament made it difficult to obtain access to the water (48%). In addition, just over one-half of water recreation users reported that tournament boats and trailers caused overcrowding in the parking lots (56%) and that tournament boats congested the boat ramps (54%); about one-third of the respondents (34%) said they felt crowded on the water because of the tournament.

Looking at the bigger picture of water recreation indicates that a majority of all water recreation users said the tournament did not interfere with their recreational pursuits, and more than one-half reported that the tournament did not cause them to leave the water—one respondent in five (20%), however, was displaced from the water because of the tournament, that is, the tournament caused them to leave the water.

3. Overall, tournament fishing boats were no more of a problem for water users than were other fishing boats. Tournament boats were not at all a problem for about eight respondents in ten (79%), results nearly equal to those for pontoons and houseboats (83% no problem). Just under one respondent in ten (8%) reported that tournament boats as well as other fishing boats were a “moderate” or “serious” problem. Less than 10% (9%) said these boats were the biggest problem on Wisconsin waters.
4. The conduct of tournaments needs to be monitored. Even anglers with tournament experience believe that tournaments should be prohibited during the opening weekend of the fishing season (71%) and during holiday weekends (72%).
5. A majority of water users reported that personal watercrafts (76%), speed boating (72%), and water skiing (72%) should be restricted by time and/or location. This is substantially more than the minority (although almost one-half) of water users that believe tournament fishing should be restricted by time and/or location (48%).
6. Respondents believe that more of the fish they catch and release survive at least one day than do fish caught and released during a bass tournament that allows culling. Three-fifths (60%) of the respondents speculate that 75% or more of the fish they release survive at least one day; only 29% of the respondents speculate that 75% or more of bass caught and released during a culling tournament survive at least one day.
7. Despite concerns about survival rates of fish caught and released during a tournament, only about one angler in five (22%) believes that tournaments do “moderate” to “a great deal of harm” to the future fishery of a waterbody. Just over one-half of the anglers (53%) believe that tournaments do “no” to “little” harm to the fishery.
8. Neither economic gain nor drawing attention to Wisconsin as a fishing destination were seen as benefits derived from fishing tournaments. Only about one-third of the anglers agree that tournaments are good for the state because of their economic contributions. These findings are hardly a ringing endorsement for tournaments and if the economic assessment proves otherwise, may mean that some promotional or educational and communication work is needed to inform the various publics of tournament benefits.



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Methods

The data presented in this report were drawn from two primary and two secondary study populations. The first primary population consisted of Wisconsin anglers. A random selection of 1,000 resident anglers, 18 years and older, was proportionally drawn from all 2005 licenses that allow a person to fish in Wisconsin. Data were obtained through the use of a mailed questionnaire developed in consultation with the Bureaus of Science Services and Fisheries Management as well as the Fishing Tournament Advisory Committee (FTAC). The questionnaire was pre-tested on 12 anglers varying in fishing experience; revisions were subsequently made resulting in a 12-page questionnaire.

Standard mailed questionnaire techniques were used to conduct this survey. Each angler was contacted a maximum of three times. These contacts included an initial questionnaire with a cover letter signed by Mike Staggs, Director of Bureau of Fisheries Management, and a first-class hand-stamped addressed return envelope (known as the full mailing); a follow-up letter which served as a “thank you” for returning the questionnaire or as a reminder to please complete and return it; and a second full mailing sent to all non-respondents. Mailings were conducted in May 2006.

The response rate is based on a formula that divides the number of returned questionnaires by the total number mailed, minus the number of cases determined to be “non-sample.” For this study a non-sample is defined as selected respondents who are deceased; mailings undelivered with no forwarding address given; or people who said they did not purchase a license (although they were in the Department database). From the sample of 1,000 anglers,

41 were eliminated as non-sample. Useable questionnaires were returned by 602 anglers for a response rate of 63%.

The University of Wisconsin Survey Center (UWSC) conducted all clerical tasks associated with this survey. They assembled the mailings, tracked the response rate, and performed the necessary data entry. All mailings originated from and were returned to the UWSC.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Wisconsin DNR) Bureau of Science Services conducted all analyses using SPSS-PC version 13.0. The margin of error for the study is +/- 3%.

The second primary population consisted of registered boaters of Wisconsin. A random selection of 1,000 resident boaters, 18 years and older, was drawn from the 2006 boater registration records. This database consists of any watercraft which has been registered, including motorboats, pontoons, canoes, kayaks, and personal watercrafts. Similar to the angler survey, data were obtained through the use of a mailed questionnaire developed in consultation with the Bureaus of Science Services and Fisheries Management as well as the FTAC. The questionnaire was pre-tested on ten boaters as well as the Fishing Tournament Advisory Committee; revisions were subsequently made resulting in a four-page questionnaire.

Standard mailed questionnaire techniques, identical to those used for the angler survey, were used to conduct this survey. Mailings were conducted in October 2006. From the sample of 1,000 boaters, 53 were eliminated as non-sample. Useable questionnaires were returned by 630 boaters for a response rate of 67%.

The Wisconsin DNR Bureau of Science Services assembled the mailings and tracked the response rate. The UWSC performed the data

entry. All mailings originated from and were returned to the Wisconsin DNR. Analyses were performed by the Bureau of Science Services using SPSS-PC version 13.0. The margin of error for the study is +/- 3%.

The secondary study populations included bass tournament participants and riparian landowners on lakes that have experienced tournaments. Focus group discussions were conducted at three bass tournaments with tournament participants. The discussions were conducted in Little Sturgeon Bay (Green Bay water), McFarland (Lake Waubesa), and Marinette (Upper Scott Flowage). Recruitment was conducted on-location with the discussions lasting 60 to 75 minutes and occurring after the awards ceremonies. A total of 21 tournament anglers participated in the focus groups (between five and eight participants per group).

Focus groups consist of a small group of people (typically five to ten) usually sitting around a table discussing a topic under the direction of a trained moderator. The discussions typically last between one and two hours. They are relaxed, informal, and generally enjoyable for the participants. The format allows participants to relate their experiences and express their opinions and feelings. During the discussion they have the opportunity to listen to others, to compare their experiences and ideas, and to interact with one another.

Surveys, which isolate respondents, and which also limit their answers to closed-ended questions, do not provide respondents with this flexibility. On the other hand, as a method for collecting information, focus groups have their limitations. They generate narrative rather than numerical data; insights rather than statistical generalizations. These are standard cautions that must accompany any focus group report. Note, however, that certain

themes recurred in ways suggesting that they may be widespread.

The other secondary study population was riparian landowners (riparians) on lakes that have experienced tournaments. In-depth personal interviews were conducted in Dane County with the Lake Waubesa Conservation Association and the Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society. In addition, two telephone interviews were conducted with riparians in Vilas County. A total of 14 riparians participated.

Direct quotations from the focus groups and the in-depth interviews are found integrated throughout this report. The quotations appear in italics and have been inserted to add context to some of the thinking that underlies the survey findings and to shed additional light on topics not covered in the two surveys.

Definition of Anglers Used in Analysis

There are numerous ways in which the data could be analyzed. Respondent age, commitment to fishing, and frequency of fishing no doubt explain many of the opinions and attitudes held by the respondents. This inquiry, however, was one component of the bass fishing tournament pilot program. Therefore, where applicable, respondent participation in fishing tournaments was chosen as the independent variable for further analyses.

Throughout this report two angler types are referenced: "general anglers" and "tournament anglers." This dichotomy was developed based on responses to the following question: "Have you ever participated in a permitted fishing tournament in Wisconsin?" Those responding "no" were labeled as "general anglers;" those responding "yes" were labeled as "tournament anglers." Additional discussion on this dichotomy is presented in the first section of the report.

Results and Discussion

Statewide Angler Survey

Participation in Tournament Fishing

This section addresses the objective of assessing the prevalence of tournament fishing in Wisconsin. Specifically, the section reports on angler awareness of tournament fishing in Wisconsin, angler participation in tournament fishing, and the specific types of tournaments participated in by anglers.

Awareness of and Participation in Tournament Fishing in Wisconsin

The questionnaire included an information textbox explaining that a permit for a tournament is required when competition is the primary intent, when prizes exceed \$500 and there are more than 20 boats or 40 participants. Respondents were also informed that over the last five years the number of permitted tournaments in Wisconsin has remained relatively stable at approximately 350 to 400 annually.

Respondents were asked if prior to receiving the questionnaire they were aware that permitted fishing tournaments occur in Wisconsin. **Figure 1 illustrates** that nearly all respondents (87%) are aware that fishing tournaments take place in Wisconsin.

Respondents were subsequently asked if they had ever participated in a permitted fishing tournament in Wisconsin. Figure 1 illustrates that tournament fishing is not widely practiced. A substantial minority of less than one-fifth (17%) has participated in some kind of permitted fishing tournament.

Respondents who participated in fishing tournaments were asked to identify what kind of tournaments. Among open water tourna-

ments, participation was most frequent for walleye (22%), bass (20%), and trout/salmon (20%) (**Table 1**). General tournaments that are not fish specific were also popular (19%). Among ice fishing tournaments, panfish tournaments were the clear favorite with 31% indicating participation. Other popular ice fishing tournaments included those for northern pike (25%), walleye (23%), and any fish (22%).

Results also show that anglers who have participated in tournaments tend to participate in more than one kind. Of those who participated in open water and/or ice fishing tournaments, more than one-half (58%) have participated in two or more different tournament types; more than one-third (36%) have participated in three or more tournament types (**Table 2**). However, within the open water and ice fishing tournament dichotomy, most anglers participated in just one tournament: of those who participated in an open water tournament, 71% participated in only one type of tournament; and of those who participated in an ice fishing tournament, 53% participated in only one type of tournament.

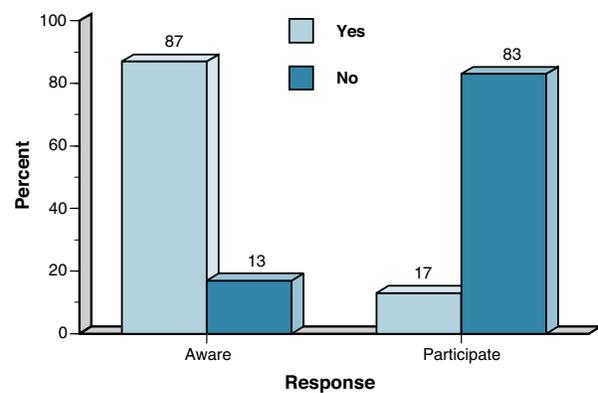


Figure 1. Response of all respondents (%) regarding awareness of and participation in tournament fishing.

Table 1. Response of all respondents (%) regarding participation in various tournament types.

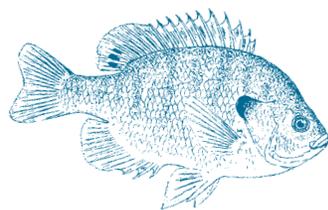
Fish type	Open water (% of all respondents)	Open water (% of tournament anglers)	Ice fishing (% of all respondents)	Ice fishing (% of tournament anglers)
Walleye	4	22	4	23
Trout/Salmon	4	20	0	1
Bass	3	20	2	13
Musky	3	13	0	1
Panfish	2	9	6	31
Northern pike	1	5	4	25
Rough fish	1	5	1	3
General	3	19	4	22

Table 2. Response of open water and ice fishing anglers (%) regarding number of tournaments participated in.

Number of Tournaments	Open water anglers	Ice fishing anglers	Total
1	71%	53%	43%
2	16	9	22
3	7	19	18
4	3	14	8
5	1	7	6
6	3	0	3
9	0	0	1

NOTE 1: Number of Tournaments indicates different types of tournaments as defined by fish species (one walleye, one bass, one musky tournament would equal three tournaments), not multiple tournament experiences with the same fish species (three bass tournaments would equal one tournament type).

NOTE 2: Analyses of the open water and ice fishing dichotomy tell us that anglers participated in both open water and ice fishing tournaments. This is supported by the finding that 13% of all anglers have participated in an open water tournament and 10% have participated in an ice fishing tournament, yet overall, 17% have participated in any kind of tournament. Further, data confirm that every angler who participated in an ice fishing tournament also participated in at least one open water tournament. We can, therefore, use the results from the question of ever participating in a permitted fishing tournament (response options of “yes” or “no”) as defining a tournament angler or a general angler.



Attitudes towards Tournament Fishing

This section addresses the objective of anglers’ perspective on how tournaments should be conducted. Specifically, the section addresses the effect tournaments may or may not have on time spent on the water, when, if ever, tournaments should be prohibited, whether or not culling should be permitted, the perceived survival rate of caught and released fish, and the impact tournaments may have on a water’s future fishery.

The Attraction of Tournament Fishing

Results of the focus groups make it clear that tournament participants are passionate about their sport. Their participation defines who they are and how they enjoy spending their time. Put another way, participants are highly committed to their tournaments.

This is what we do. Not like a job or a career but it’s why I work so I can do these tournaments.

It’s what we do. It’s the only type of fish we fish for in the summer. I don’t know many of these guys that go out walleye or trout fishing. Once you get into the tournament circuit, you

become completely committed to it. It's who you are. It's what we do. It's a lifestyle.

We spend a lot of time fishing but we also spend more time working—so that we can afford to go fishing.

It's my favorite way to spend time. Not just the fishing but everything about them. You make great friends, long friends at these tournaments. I think I knew just about everybody here today. My wife has started coming with me so we make them into short trips like little vacations.

Some guys play golf or whatever. Me, I do tournaments. That's my thing. I know everybody here and I wouldn't miss this for the world.

I come here for the enjoyment and camaraderie and seeing the others. I've met a lot of guys from all over the state and this is our way of getting together. I've met people that I'll never forget.

No one that participated in the focus groups was a career tournament angler. While they acknowledge that it might be possible to make a career of tournament fishing, it is not a motivation for their participation.

You can [be a professional] but it's hard. We work full time and do tournaments as a side thing. Some people use it as a small business...you can make money but you really have to put the time and effort into it. Most

guys I know are doing it as a serious hobby, something we love, not to make money.

Top prize I think is \$1,500 and split between four guys is not even \$400. I come here not to make money.

It's a hobby. There's nobody here that's doing it for a living. It's all about bragging rights... The money you make is nice but it's all about bragging.

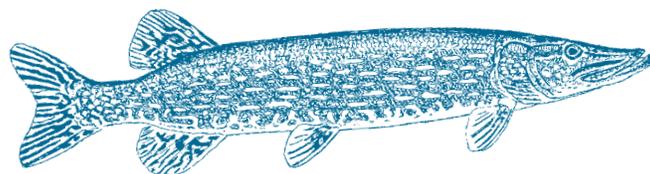
You factor in your boat and all the other costs and your time and you're lucky to break even...It's a really expensive version of a softball league.

So what is it about tournament fishing that attracts the participants? Competition, rather than prize money, is the primary motivation.

I'm competitive by nature you know. I like to fish, so when I'm competitive by nature, hence, the bass tournament.

I'd say competition is probably about 75% the reason because it's not about the money. If it was about the money, we wouldn't be here.

And the competition, it's something I can compete in and do it against anybody. You gotta be in surprisingly okay shape, well you know, fit, to stand all day and throw and cast. We're not tossing a bobber and sitting. You're making a cast every 30 seconds to every minute.



Tournament anglers describe three levels of competition: competition with themselves to do better than their previous outing, competition with their buddy or tournament partner, and competition with the other participants.

Well there's competition with myself to do better than last year or the last tournament and there's with your partner in the boat and of course with the other boats. Best is to beat a buddy, a buddy you got in the tournament. If you got a buddy in the tournament it's most satisfying to beat them. I got a buddy that I fish with quite often in a partner's tournament and we fish for \$2 between us for the most weight and it's more satisfying to win that \$2 than it is to win the \$300.

I could see it as three types of competition. Competition for yourself—I did it better this time than before. Competition perhaps with your partner. And then competition between all the guys.

Competition with yourself is probably first but creaming the guy you're in the boat with is also up there.

It's good to know just fishing against yourself how you do from tournament to tournament. How you can do better in the next tournament.

And in the words of a riparian who enjoys fishing:

Fishing is competitive. We love to fish. Every time I fish with somebody in the same boat we usually have a buck for the first fish or a buck for the most. Nothing high but it's a little of that going on. It makes it more fun.

Tournament Impact on Fishing Quality and Water Access

Although less than 20% of all anglers reported that they participated in a permitted fishing tournament, a majority (61%) said they have been on a body of water while a tournament was in progress as a non-participant. Being on the water during a tournament as a non-participant was significantly more common for tournament anglers (83%) than for general anglers (56%) (chi square = 23.37, 1 df, $p < 0.001$).

Respondents who said they had been on the water during a tournament as non-participants were asked if they thought the tournament affected the quality of their fishing that day. Responses were measured on a 5-point scale where 1 represents “definitely yes,” 2 represents “probably yes,” 3 represents “probably no,” 4 represents “definitely no,” and 5 represents “unsure.” A slight majority of 52% indicated that the tournament somehow affected the quality of their fishing day. Respondents were also asked if they thought the tournament interfered with access to the



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water, that is, their ability to get on the water. Responses were measured on a 5-point scale where 1 represents “very difficult,” 2 represents “somewhat difficult,” 3 represents “not too difficult,” 4 represents “not at all difficult,” and 5 represents “unsure.” Just under one-half of all anglers (48%) reported that the tournament made it more difficult for them to get on the water.

Table 3 indicates that fishing tournaments have affected anglers that are not participating in the tournament. The impact on fishing quality was significantly greater for general anglers (57%) than for tournament anglers (36%) (chi square = 11.66, 3 df, $p < 0.009$). Further, access to the water was more difficult for a greater proportion of general anglers (51%) than for tournament anglers (42%), although this difference is not significant.

Tournament Numbers and Holiday Permits

Another question addressed the number of tournaments in Wisconsin. The introduction to the question explained that the number of permitted fishing tournaments has remained relatively stable at approximately 350 to 400 annually.

Respondents were asked whether they thought the number of permitted tournaments in Wisconsin should increase or decrease. Respondents were offered six response options with 1 representing “definitely decrease,” 2 representing “probably decrease,” 3 representing “remain at current level,” 4 representing “probably increase,” 5 representing “definitely increase,” and 6 representing “unsure.” A substantial proportion of respondents (27%) were not sure how to respond. The mean score for all anglers, based on a 5-point scale (“unsure” omitted), was 2.5, indicating that tournament numbers should remain as they are or possibly decrease.

The greatest proportion of anglers feels that the number of tournaments should remain at the current level (**Table 4**). More than one-third (37%) of the general anglers and almost one-half (49%) of the tournament anglers think permitted tournament numbers should not change. Note that those who favor a decrease in the number of tournaments greatly outweigh those who favor an increase.

Interviews with waterfront property owners reveal their concern with the potential for tournaments to increase in frequency and grow in size. Their concern is that as tournaments

Table 3. Response of anglers (%) regarding impact of tournament on fishing quality and access to water.

	General angler	Tournament angler	Total
Affect fishing quality?			
Yes	57%	36%	52%
No	43	64	48
Interfere with water access?			
Difficult	51%	42%	48%
Not difficult	49	58	52

NOTE 1: The questionnaire did not specify how quality was affected. Thus, a tournament could result in a beneficial or detrimental experience. Post-survey interviews with anglers indicate that the tournament negatively affected their fishing day. It is, however, possible that some respondents experienced a positive affect from the tournament (such as seeing large fish or knowing where to fish).

NOTE 2: No one responded “unsure” to the two questions about fishing quality and water access.

Table 4. Response of anglers (%) to the question “Should tournaments in Wisconsin increase, decrease, or remain at current level?”

Should tournaments in Wisconsin:	General angler	Tournament angler	Total
Decrease?	31%	22%	29%
Current level?	37	49	39
Increase?	4	5	4
Unsure	28	24	27

NOTE: Although substantive differences between angler types are observed, the differences are not statistically significant.

grow, the incidents of rude behavior will correspondingly grow.

I don't think most people object to tournaments per se, but when they start to become every weekend that becomes another issue...I think frequency could be an important issue.

I'm wondering what the number of tournaments would be and how many participants you're talking about. Because if they grew in size and number, that could be a problem.

I have the feeling that as the prize money and everything else increases, the size and number, the problems associated with tournaments also will increase. If somebody plunks down a \$5,000 entrance fee and has a \$40,000 boat, he's gonna zip around and do whatever it takes to get those fish and recoup his initial costs of the tournament with the expectation of winning the prize money.

...the thing is that if an awful lot of money was at stake from the tournament, then the tournament competitors become much more competitive and they're probably going to be less courteous to other lake users.

Keeping the tournament small in all terms of their scale is much more appealing. It's a sport, a competitive sport, people are doing it for

one upmanship or whatever, 'I beat you' so I think that small would be more reasonable.

The questionnaire considered when permitted tournaments should be allowed on Wisconsin waters. Specifically, should tournaments be conducted during the opening weekend of the fishing season or on holiday weekends such as July 4th and Labor Day? Responses were based on a 5-point scale where 1 represents “definitely no,” 2 represents “probably no,” 3 represents “unsure,” 4 represents “probably yes,” and 5 represents “definitely yes.” The mean responses were 1.7 for allowing tournaments during opening weekend of the fishing season and 1.9 for tournaments during holiday weekends—both scores indicative of solid opposition.

Table 5 indicates that a majority of all anglers on both questions said “no.” Seven anglers in ten (71%) were opposed to tournaments during the opening weekend of the fishing season. A nearly equal percentage of anglers (67%) were opposed to the conduct of tournaments during holiday weekends.

When riparians were asked if there was any particular time of the year they thought tournaments should not be allowed, those with an opinion agreed they should not be held during holiday weekends when the lakes are most crowded.

Probably the only time I would say not to have them is on the holiday weekends.

Table 5. Response of anglers (%) to the question “Should tournaments be allowed on opening and holiday weekends?”

	General angler	Tournament angler	Total
Allowed on opening weekend?			
No	71%	71%	71%
Unsure	20	13	20
Yes	9	16	10
Allowed on holiday weekends?			
No	66%	72%	67%
Unsure	23	11	22
Yes	11	17	11

NOTE: Significant differences were not found between general anglers and tournament anglers. Essentially, even anglers that have tournament experience seem to be saying that there is a time and place for tournaments but not during fishing’s opening weekend or heavy recreation weekends over the summer holidays.

That’s when we do get the highest population of users on the lake.

The July four weekend would be a bad time because the lake is so crowded not just with us property owners but with all the people visiting the residents and just with the tourists that come up here. That would not be the time for a tournament.

Any of the holidays. Like he said, the Fourth of July, but also Memorial weekend and Labor Day. Boy, at the end of the summer, that’s like our best week of weather and we have a lot of people on the water so having tournament boats zipping around wouldn’t be a good idea...And really, I don’t think they [tournament participants] would like it either because of all of the other boats and skiers and people.



Jordan Perchenik

Will There Be Bass Tournaments in July and August?

Tournament participants are seriously concerned that the State of Wisconsin will prohibit bass tournaments during July and August. Their understanding is that high water temperatures can induce stress and increase mortality for caught-and-released bass.

What about the new proposed rule of a ban from July and August, no catch-and-release tournaments because the water is too warm? That takes away from my entertainment, my sport, from the short amount of time that Wisconsin has.

Look at how many fish they lose in these tournaments. Not many. One or two. What did they weigh in, 1,500 bass at the Sturgeon Bay open? I think they lost one fish out of the pen.

They did the survey on Shawano Lake last year at the fall classic and found that they never lost a fish. They boom shocked and put a net full of fish here and took all the tournament fish and put them in another net and kept for like three to five days and none of them died in either net. So the mortality rate

was fine. The tournament fish had the same mortality results as the boom shocked fish.

They don't stop tournaments in July and August in the south and the water temperature's 15 degrees warmer.

This participant noted that today's live-wells are designed to reduce mortality by providing cool, aerated water.

Fish held in confinement in warm water without proper aeration they're more susceptible to dying, but that's ridiculous with our live-wells now-a-days.

Participants were particularly vocal about the DNR's role in bass mortality attributed to tournaments.

You know who's killing the fish, don't you? The DNR. All the fish they put them in a small tank. They put 500 fish in a itty bitty tank, did not feed them for a week and just left them in there. And they wondered why they were dying. Well, what do you think?

If they're basing it on 1,000 fish put in a pen on a tributary of the Mississippi that had low current when it was 100 degrees outside, that may not be anything more than a fish getting stressed trying to get itself back to a spot where it's comfortable.

They actually also have problems with that virus and who knows, maybe by penning them up it spread and more died.

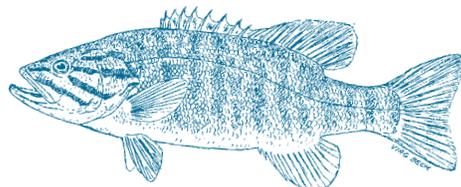
You want to have the DNR curtail or kill tournaments in Wisconsin, a July through August ban will do it.

Tournament participants believe the push for a July/August ban on tournaments is coming from lake associations.

In my opinion the push is coming from the Wisconsin Association of Lakes. The statement to the DNR is ridiculous. From lakefront owners. They're blaming all this water pressure on us. Anybody who's been to these bigger lakes for a tournament, well, we're probably only 30% of the boats on the water. And we have a trolling motor in the water 95% of the time. We're not running across the lakes all day. People just don't want us on their lakes.

They buy a million dollar home on the lake and take out all the trees and put in a dock, well now they don't want anybody fishing around their dock. They're mad about these weeds, blaming us saying we're bringing them back and forth and I'm not a biologist but if you fertilize your lawn and dump all these nutrients into the water through the runoff then something's gonna grow.

What gives them the right to cut the weeds they see because they never come back. Just because they're property owners? Big deal. And it's waterfowl habitat, fish habitat. That water is the property of everybody in the state, not just the people with property around it.



Participants also believe they are being needlessly persecuted. If bass tournaments in July and August are prohibited, they believe bass fishing for the general angler should also be prohibited.

The way I feel is that it's our resource too, unless you're going to go after bass fishing in general—no bass fishing in the summer. Otherwise leave us alone. It's our resource as much as anyone's. I don't believe you have any right to do that.

We all buy the same license as everybody else. I just don't see what the problem is... We're paying the same license as the other guys so why can't we use the resource? That's a 100% kill right there that they do. If we lose a fish here or there then we're still battling 80%. That's pretty good, better than the other guys.

Are they proposing to shut down bass fishing for the general public? No, just in tournaments. So guys can go out and catch five and kill 'em and go home and those five are gone forever. There's no other way of putting it—it's okay for a guy to catch five and eat them but it's not okay for us to catch five and release them back into the system?

To Cull or Not to Cull?

The questionnaire included an information textbox defining culling as:

...keeping a fish alive in a live-well in the angler's boat and releasing the fish back into the water from which it was caught and replacing it with a different, usually larger fish. Typically, anglers do not cull until they reach the bag limit. So a tournament angler would fish for legal sized fish and keep them alive in his/her live-well until the bag

limit is reached. At that point, the angler continues to fish and if a fish is caught larger than one in the live-well, the larger one is kept and the smallest one from the live-well is released. After the fish are weighed at the tournament's registration station all live fish are released back into the water. Culling in Wisconsin is illegal.

In 2004 the state legislature enacted a bass fishing tournament pilot program. The purpose of the pilot program is to evaluate the impacts of culling through selected bass tournaments.

Respondents were asked if prior to receiving the questionnaire they were aware of culling being practiced during tournaments in other states. A little more than one-half of all anglers (53%) were aware of culling being practiced in other states. Tournament anglers were significantly more aware of the practice than were general anglers (64% compared to 51%, respectively; chi square = 4.95, 1 df, $p < 0.017$).

An additional textbox explained that for:

a pilot program bass tournament to allow culling, the tournament must meet specific live-well standards. These standards state that the live-well in each participant's boat be an original manufactured part of the boat that provides oxygen to the well and circulates fresh water.

Respondents were then asked two questions: (1) should culling be allowed in Wisconsin bass tournaments if participants are not required to meet live-well standards? and (2) should culling be allowed in Wisconsin bass tournaments if participants are required to meet live-well standards or should participants be required to follow the general fishing regulations that prohibit culling?

Responses to both questions were on a 5-point scale where 1 represents "definitely be allowed," 2 represents "probably be allowed," 3 represents "unsure," 4 represents "probably

be prohibited,” and 5 represents “definitely be prohibited.” The mean response for culling without live-well regulations was 4.5, indicating strong opposition; the mean response for culling with live-well regulations was 3.4, indicating a degree of uncertainty among anglers.

Nearly all anglers, including those with tournament experience, are opposed to culling in tournaments that do not require the above-defined live-well standards (Table 6). Although a significant difference was not found between angler types, substantively, a higher proportion of tournament anglers (94%) than general anglers (83%) opposed this idea.

When live-well standards are introduced to the question, opposition drops for all anglers, but the greatest proportion of anglers still feel that culling during tournaments should not be allowed (Table 6). Approximately one-half (51%) of all anglers are opposed to culling even with the live-well standards. Slightly more tournament anglers (38%) than general anglers (30%) are supportive of culling with live-well standards for bass tournaments (although the difference is not statistically significant).

During the focus groups tournament participants had the most to say about culling. In their view, culling is essential for tournament advancement in Wisconsin. They believe that culling would generate more money for the

state by attracting larger tournaments. They also point to numerous other states that have successful culling tournaments without doing harm to the fishery.

Participants believe that culling should be permitted—it only makes sense.

Say you got five fish in your boat [the limit]. You catch another one, the fish of a lifetime. You want to mount it and put it on the wall. You can't, you gotta let it go. Anybody, tournament or regular angler, you gotta let it go because you can't cull. So I say why not?

It's stupid now. You allow some guy to catch five and kill them but you won't allow me to catch five and release that same day in the same lake? Go figure.

If someone could show me actual biological research telling us that we were hurting the fishery then maybe they'd have something. But I don't see any. Fishing is as good, probably better than it's ever been.

The best thing that could happen for tournaments is culling, that's the number one issue, the best thing for tournaments in Wisconsin.

Culling would attract larger tournaments and, therefore, generate greater revenue for the state.

Table 6. Response of anglers (%) to the question “Should culling in tournaments be allowed with and/or without live-well regulations?”

	General angler	Tournament angler	Total
Allow culling without live-well regulations?			
Allow	6%	1%	5%
Unsure	11	5	10
Prohibit	83	94	85
Allow culling with live-well regulations?			
Allow	30%	38%	32%
Unsure	19	10	17
Prohibit	51	52	51

I think you're going to prevent a lot of your big tournaments from coming in without it. It will bring in a lot more money. You bring in FLW to a local lake, they're bringing in \$50,000 or \$60,000, plus, all the motels and restaurants...Culling is something we need to look at. And if these guys can only catch five fish and then quit, that won't work.

Culling will attract the bigger, better tournaments which will generate more money for the locals and the whole state.

BASS would come here if we could have a culling tournament. But they said not until you lift the no culling.

Participants pointed out that other states offer culling tournaments.

This culling in tournaments is not new so why doesn't Wisconsin check with Florida and some of the other states that have tournaments nine and ten months out of the year?

If you look at all the big tournaments that take place all the big money is down south. Everybody knows that. Well they've been culling in the southern states for years and years and you never hear anything bad about it. Even in the bass magazines you don't hear anything bad. The only thing you ever hear about is fishing during the spawn. That's when a lot of people have the problem with it.

Participants also believed that culling would be healthier for the fishery. By spending a short amount of time in their "recovery" live-wells, fish would be returned to the water in healthier conditions than if they were not returned until after the weigh-in process.

I think culling in tournaments should be allowed. To be honest I think it would be better for the resource because the fish would be spending less time in the live-well. You'd be taking them out after spending only a little time in there maybe.

I don't believe culling hurts anything at all. When I let a fish go that's been in my live-well it's way healthier than if a person's got it hanging off a stringer. Them fish are going back into an environment and 90% of the time when you catch them you're catching them in deeper water, and if you let them go at the shoreline, well that's not good, so they're going to have a much better chance from the live-well.

Sitting in our live-wells is no stress at all on the fish. None at all. With your aerated live-wells and timers and catch-and-release, you're actually putting more into that fish than when it was caught. You put it on a stringer and it's gonna die. But you put it in these live-wells that we got now with the aeration systems we got, it's more healthy for them. Like you're reviving them.

They proved beyond a reasonable doubt that letting the big females go after catching definitely does not hurt the fish. With today's technology and the new boats with the live-well systems with water coming in and out, it's just like the fish is in its own environment. I don't see any negative aspect to culling at all.

To be fair, when the participants were asked if they would have fished the pilot tournament if they could not cull, nearly all responded, "Yes, definitely. Oh, yea."

The discussion on allowing culling in tournaments led into a question of equity—should

culling be limited to tournaments or should it be open to the general angling public? The consensus was that the required equipment (i.e., live-wells) should dictate who can cull.

It almost can't be for everyone because you would have to qualify to do that kind of fishing. The person who is fishing on the bank with a bucket or a stinger, no you can't have that.

So culling is allowed as long as the following are met... You would have to meet certain requirements with live-wells and stuff.

The reason we should be allowed to cull now is because of the live-wells we have in our boats. The aerator system and fresh water, that's what's needed. If a guy doesn't have that, he's using an old holding tank or definitely not a stringer, then I say no way should that person be allowed to cull. But if he's got the right equipment, well then, okay.

Relative to culling, tournament participants were asked if they should be allowed to fish under a set of different regulations than general anglers. The unanimous response was to establish a "tournament" or a "culling" stamp, allowing them to cull, and with the proceeds from the stamp being dedicated to the state's tournament program.

Most tournament participants support a stamp, costing \$10 to \$15, allowing them to cull.

I think it should be allowed. I brought up that I'd be willing to spend \$10 or \$15 a year for a separate license like a duck stamp that would give me that right. If that's what it takes to do that, to validate that, then I'd do it. There should be a culling stamp.

I can see having a tournament stamp that allows live releases. It would require that your boat have the right equipment, the live-well, to handle it.

I'd like to see us get a tournament stamp that would allow us to cull. You know a \$10 stamp would bring in a lot of revenue. We have what, 1,000 members, 700 in our federation, well, that's \$70,000 coming back to the state.

It would be the same as a turkey stamp. Say \$10 or \$15 for an annual tournament stamp, I think that would be a fair price and that would cover every tournament you enter for the whole state... Fifty dollars would be outrageous for a working man and 90% of us are. But \$10 or \$15 seems fair.

You pay for a duck stamp, a turkey stamp, so hey, make a tournament stamp for us, or a bass stamp.

This is all about money as far as I'm concerned. And if it's about money, the only way I'll pay extra is if you allow me to cull. And I'll pay money to cull, maybe \$10 to \$15 a year but just to cull.

The stamp "program" would operate similar to the trout or turkey stamp programs where generated revenues would be earmarked for the tournament program.

I think a tournament stamp is a good thing as long as that money is used to be put back into the bass tournament program. It should be helping our resources, especially at the local level. The money should go back to the lake resource.

You have a culling stamp or a tournament stamp. To do mortality studies or whatever is needed for the tournaments. I would hope that it's put back into the resource... That would be one of the requirements like duck stamps are put back into the duck program.

I think it should be for the tournaments. We spend thousands of dollars every year so \$15 isn't anything... We put way more back into the resource as does the guy who catches and eats them. We catch and release them into the same system so why should we have to pay an extra \$15 if it's not for the tournaments?

Participants disagreed on how the stamp should be packaged. Some suggested a culling stamp should be available to all anglers that met the equipment requirements; others believed a tournament stamp should be developed specific for culling in tournaments.

There's a difference between labeling it a tournament stamp and a culling stamp. A culling stamp would be for anybody as long as they meet certain requirements.

Calling it a culling stamp would stir up the general public. If you call it a tournament stamp it would be for tournaments...

No way. Anybody who met the requirements could cull. You can't go against the public.

What about the guy who has the same boat and equipment as us but doesn't do the tournaments? Can he cull?

[In reply] He should be able to buy the stamp, yes, but you can only cull during a tournament. I think that's the only way to do it.

I don't agree. You're putting the tournament angler up on a pedestal. You can't do that. If the guy has the equipment he should have the same rights to the resource as we do. Otherwise it will never fly.

Related to additional fees, some participants volunteered their thoughts on the benefits of a tournament permit. Their belief is that a required permit would legitimize their recreation and prevent poorly managed tournaments from being conducted.

A tournament permit would be a good idea. It would keep the ma and pa tavern on the lake from having their own because they wouldn't want to pay the fee. And if you got the game warden out there and they find out that they're running a tournament that falls under the criteria without a permit, then they get a big fine.

It would scare a lot of the crap tournaments out of the system. Make them all legit and it would help us as well.

Riparians' Thoughts on Culling

In general, riparians did not object to culling. Most saw culling as being preferable to keeping and killing fish. Some reserved their opinion until more definitive information is available on the survival rate of fish that have been kept in a live-well. Others, regardless of the survival rate, objected to culling.

Some riparians preferred culling to catch-and-keep fishing and noted that culling may not be possible, or should not be allowed, for all anglers.

It's better than keeping everything you catch. I mean they talk about the enjoyment they get from fishing, being outdoors and with

friends and family and all, so why do you have to keep everything you catch? No, I'd rather see them take a picture and put the fish back in the water. Or if they have to keep it for a while like for a tournament who catches the biggest fish, then make sure the fish are in these live-wells he's talking about and they get released soon so as to keep them healthy and help them survive.

Personal experience from fishing in South Dakota for walleyes is that it was just fine. I don't know the biological impact of culling on the lake we were on and we were very careful about handling and releasing the fish so I don't have any problem with it.

You told us that these tournaments aren't new so what I see is that the fish populations aren't shrinking up here so what's the problem? They're putting the fish back which should be a good thing, right? Better than keeping them all like some of these tourist vacations do. Keep everything they catch. But these guys are putting them back in the water so what's the problem?

Culling may not be suitable for all anglers.

You certainly don't want the guy who puts his fish on a stringer in 70 degree water for hours and then catches a bigger fish to be allowed to release a smaller fish from the stringer.

Another thing about culling is that the general angler might not be as skilled at getting the fish off the hook as the professional so there might be more injury if culling was allowed for everyone...and with fishing with live bait for the general angler there will probably be more fish that swallow it deep than you get in a tournament.

Support for or opposition to culling will depend on results from culling mortality research.

For me it all depends on how many survive. I mean I'd rather see them put the fish back than keep them for some big feed-bag dinner but if the survival rate is down there then it seems to me all you're doing is torturing the fish. Like prolonging its eventual slow death. So prove to me that culling doesn't kill fish first. If it does, than I say no way. But if they survive, than I say okay, go ahead with your culling.

Can you answer if culling eventually kills the fish? Sure you're putting it back in the water but look what it goes through. How long is it in the live-well and how long is it out of the water being weighed and taking pictures and all? That's not the same as the catch-and-release trout fishing like we did when we would go out west.

And I wonder about this disease that bass get. If you put them altogether would that be a problem with tournaments, too?

I didn't realize that the fish are returned to the water so I may have had a presupposition that the fish population would suffer from too many tournaments. If it turns out that a biological survey tells us that there's very little impact from a tournament to the fish population of the lake, I think that would be great news and refreshing news to a lot of people on the lake that might not know that.

Another riparian objected to culling because tournament participants should follow the same regulations as other anglers.

I say a fair tournament is who's the best by looking at the five fish they catch or whatever the limit is that I could catch without culling. So when you catch fish you have to decide do I throw it back in the water or do I put it in my well for measuring? There's none of this switching for a bigger fish once you catch your limit...The fish still have to be returned to the water afterwards but none of this switching should be allowed.

During the discussion with riparians it became clear that support for culling and tournaments in general was not without serious caveats. Most notable, riparians made it clear that regardless of culling, tournaments should be prohibited if they alter the “culture of the lake” in any way.

If it was shown that these tournaments were having an effect on the fish population or a certain age class of fish then I would say you would have to at least limit the frequency of the tournaments if not eliminate them completely...

Anything that affects the ecosystem or changes the demographics of the fish population.

Anything that would destroy the lake, the culture of the lake, I'm going to say no to...If the culling actually brought disease to the lake or made more fish die than you can't do it.

The biological implications. If it's not gonna have any impact on the fish population then I'd be much more in favor of them. [Not to imply current opposition.]



Perceived Survival Rate of Caught and Released Fish

Respondents were asked three questions pertaining to the survival rate of caught and released fish. The first two questions asked them to (1) speculate what percentage of fish they catch and release survive at least one day; and (2) speculate what percentage of bass caught and released during a culling tournament survive at least one day. The third question asked respondents what they considered to be an acceptable one-day survival rate for bass caught and released during a culling tournament. Responses were measured on a 7-point scale where 1 represents “less than 10%,” 2 represents “10%–24%,” 3 represents “25%–49%,” 4 represents “50%–74%,” 5 represents “75%–89%,” 6 represents “90% or higher,” and 7 represents “unsure.” These were difficult questions as noted by the large proportion of “unsure” responses—17% to nearly one-third (31%) were unable to offer an opinion. When the “unsure” responses are omitted, resulting in a 6-point scale, a clear difference is found in the mean scores for survival rates of released fish (Table 7). Respondents speculate that fish they catch and release have significantly higher survival rates than do bass caught during a tournament that allows culling. The mean score for one-day survival rates for fish caught and released by the respondents was 5.0, equating to a 75%–89% survival rate; the mean score for one-day survival rates for bass caught and released during a culling tournament was 4.1, equating to a 50%–74% survival rate ($p < 0.001$). The mean score for an acceptable one-day survival rate for bass caught and released during a culling tournament was 5.3, very similar to the respondents’ mean score and significantly higher than the speculated tournament mean score ($p < 0.001$).

Table 7. Respondents perception of one-day survival rate (%) of caught and released fish.

Survival rate	Respondent caught and released fish	Tournament culling	Tournament acceptable survival
< 10%	2%	3%	2%
10%–24%	3	5	2
25%–49%	4	12	1
50%–74%	12	20	7
75%–89%	20	17	20
90%–100%	40	12	43
Unsure	17	31	25
Mean (6-pt)	5.0	4.1	5.3

NOTE: Statistical differences were not found between general anglers and tournament anglers for speculated survival rates and acceptable survival rates.

Table 7 indicates that respondents believe more fish they catch and release survive at least one day than do fish caught and released during a bass tournament that allows culling. Three-fifths (60%) of the respondents speculate that 75% or more of the fish they release survive at least one day; only 2% of the respondents speculate that 75% or more of bass caught and released during a culling tournament survive at least one day. Further, acceptable survival rates for bass tournaments are more in-line with non-tournament than with tournament speculation. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the respondents believe an acceptable survival rate for bass caught and released during a culling tournament is 75% or higher.

Tournaments and Impacts on the Future Fishery

The lower speculated survival rates of fish caught and released during a bass culling tournament leads one to question if anglers believe tournaments are harmful to the water’s fishery. The questionnaire asked if on a body of water where a tournament has occurred, how much harm, if any, the respondents think the tournament does to the future fishery resource in that water. Responses were on a 5-point scale where 1 represents “no harm at

all,” 2 represents “a little harm,” 3 represents “unsure,” 4 represents “moderate (more than a little) harm,” and 5 represents “a great deal of harm.” The mean score for all anglers was 2.5, indicating a level of uncertainty but leaning towards a little harm.

As with the previous question, respondents had difficulty offering an opinion on the potential harm due to tournament fishing. Approximately one-fifth of the general anglers (22%) and 15% of the tournament anglers were not sure how much harm to think is done (Table 8). In light of that uncertainty, the highest proportion of anglers thought that tournaments do “no” to “little” harm to the future fishery on a tournament water body. This was noted by one-half (51%) of the general anglers and more than three-fifths (63%) of the tournament anglers. A sizeable minority of about one-fourth (27%) of the general anglers and the tournament anglers (23%) believe that tournaments do “moderate” to “a great deal of harm” to the future fishery of a water body.

Further analyses reveal that respondents’ beliefs about the potential harm to fishery resources due to tournament fishing is a likely influence on their beliefs about culling and other tournament aspects. Figure 2 indicates

Table 8. Response of anglers (%) to the question “Do tournaments harm future fishery resource?”

Harm	General angler	Tournament angler	Total
No/Little harm	51%	63%	53%
Unsure	22	15	26
Moderate/Great deal of harm	27	23	22

NOTE: Although substantive differences exist between general anglers and tournament anglers, their beliefs about potential harm to the fishery resource due to tournaments were not statistically different.

significant affects stemming from the respondents’ beliefs about the level of harm done to a fishery after a tournament has occurred.

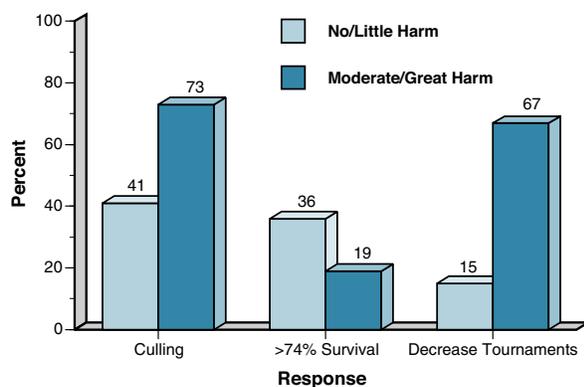


Figure 2. Respondents’ beliefs (%) about harm to future fishery due to tournament fishing and various aspects of tournaments.

Those who believe that tournaments “moderately” or “greatly” harm the fishery resource are:

- more likely to oppose culling with live-well standards than those who believe the resource has had “no” or a “little” harm (73% compared to 41%, respectively) (chi square = 88.56, 8 df, $p < 0.001$);
- less likely to speculate that a high percentage (75% to 100%) of tournament caught and released fish will survive than those who believe the resource has had “no” or a “little” harm (19% compared to 36%, respectively) (chi square = 88.56, 8 df, $p < 0.001$);

- much more likely to believe that the number of permitted tournaments in Wisconsin should decrease than those who believe the resource has had “no” or a “little” harm (67% compared to 15%, respectively) (chi square = 197.24, 6 df, $p < 0.001$).

Tournaments and Invasive Species

Participants in the riparian focus groups saw an additional potential impact from tournaments—the risk of introductions of exotic and invasive species.

I’d be concerned about them cleaning their boats and trailers so as not to spread unwanted species from one lake to another. That would be a major worry about increasing tournament numbers would be that we get some exotic brought into the lake. That could really change the culture of our lake.

Introduction of exotics would be a concern. If tournaments grow in popularity it only makes sense that the chances of them bringing in something from one lake to another is gonna increase.

I mean I would expect this from anybody who uses a boat on different waters that they thoroughly clean the boat and the trailer. You have to today because what they have down south, or like the zebra mussels in Lake Michigan, well I don’t want them here.

While riparians expressed concern over the potential introduction of exotic and invasive species due to increasing tournament numbers and tournament boats, participants in the tournament focus groups offered a very different take on exotics. From their perspective, some exotics have been beneficial to their fishing and to the water.

Gobies are a growing food source and where they are found, sport fish flourish.

The gobies are food, they are I believe. When I was on the Bay there's tons of gobies and the smallmouth are right there. I think that's a good thing.

That's right. The gobies are a great food source for the sport fish.

Zebra mussels clean the water and that has contributed to an improved bass fishery.

The zebra mussel. Well shipping-wise they're quite a nuisance but as far as fishing I don't see what the problem is.

The zebra mussel helped to clear the water and that's helped the bass.

Now another example with the zebra mussels is back in the '80s all we used to fish up here was slime. Green Bay was slime and then the zebra mussels came and cleaned everything off. You can see even in early July, you used to be able to see 18 feet after the zebra mussels came. And now they're dieing off and the slime is coming back, so that cycle is kind of running itself...

The populations are there. We were in 45 ft. of water and as fast as we could drop it

down, we were catching four and five inch bass... We thought it was just balls of bait fish, and they were little bass. That's new since the mussel came in.

Tournament anglers acknowledged that they feel they are blamed by other anglers and by riparians for a change in the fishery and the culture of the lake.

And like up in Door County where years ago you used to catch 30, 50 fish in eight or ten feet of water but with the zebra mussel and the goby, clearing the water, making it cleaner, the fish moved into deeper water and people aren't adjusting to that. So they think the fishery has gone backwards because they can't go to the same spot and fish they way they did ten years ago. Well that's not our fault and we catch flack for that. The fishery has changed but they haven't changed how they fish.

I think a lot of it is right here with the zebra mussel. When that water got cleared up, fish moved to different, deeper locations than what these locals or other people don't know. Well they gotta move to where the fish are.

You put a weed cutter out on the lake well that's just chopping them up and dropping them and re-germinating the weeds all over the lakes and the bad weeds are growing ten times faster than the good weeds and it's choking the lakes... And some of those cutters are transferred from one lake to another, spreading the bad weeds. But they have a problem with us moving aquatic vegetation from lake to lake? We all have nice boats and we try to take care of them—better than the average boat.

Other participants acknowledged that zebra mussels can be detrimental and that as a practice, they clean their boats and trailers before entering new water.

No, they are a nuisance for fishing. They'll cut your line big time. They are a nuisance. They clutter everything up, and cling to everything, any kind of rock.

We clean our boat as soon as we're out of the water and wash it down before the next tournament. It's common practice.

Benefits from Fishing Tournaments

Respondents were asked their opinions regarding three statements about bass fishing tournaments that allow culling. The statements were: “Thinking about bass fishing tournaments that allow culling would you say they are good for the state because...

- ...they generate economic benefits to local economies.
- ...they draw attention to Wisconsin as a fishing destination.
- ...the possible economic benefits justify the impact tournaments may have on the fishery resource.

Responses were on a 5-point scale where 1 represents “strongly disagree,” 3 represents “neutral,” and 5 represents “strongly agree.” The mean score for benefits to local economies and drawing attention to the state was 3.0 for both, indicating that respondents are divided on the issues. The mean score for possible economic benefits justifying possible resource impacts was 2.6, indicating a leaning towards disagreement.

Respondents were fairly evenly divided on two of the statements (Table 9). About one-fourth (26%) of the respondents do not believe that bass fishing tournaments that allow culling benefit local economies; one-third (33%) believe that such tournaments are good for local economies. Three respondents in ten (30%) do not believe that bass fishing tournaments that allow culling would draw attention to the state as a fishing destination; slightly more respondents (36%) believe that such tournaments would generate attention.

The statement with the greatest variance was whether or not bass fishing tournaments that allow culling are good for the state because the possible economic benefits justify the impact tournaments may have on the fishery resource. More than twice as many respondents disagreed (42%) with the statement as agreed (18%). Even with this disparity, it is difficult to project a meaningful direction because of the

Table 9. Respondents’ agreement or disagreement (%) with three statements about tournament fishing.

Level of agreement	Statements		
	Generate benefits to local economies	Draw attention to state as fishing destination	Economic benefits justify possible resource impacts
Disagree	26%	30%	42%
Neutral	42	34	39
Agree	33	36	18

NOTE: Statistical differences between general anglers and tournament anglers were not found for each of the three statements.

high “neutral” response—two-fifths (39%) of the respondents were indifferent.

Focus group participants were asked what, if any, benefits are derived from the tournaments. They cited benefits to the economy and the fishery resource.

Tournaments contribute to the state and to local economies.

I'd say to talk to the towns that have big tournaments. How much money does that bring into their community? How much attention to the lake?

Think of the money that we spend, think how much we're contributing through taxes on our equipment, gear, the gas tax...I spend at least \$10,000 a year on tournaments. All that money is taxed so I'm contributing through my tax dollars and that runs right back into the resource pot.

There's a lot of dollars that Wisconsin won't have if they eliminate tournaments.

Look at Wisota. What did that bring in, like \$2 million dollars? I mean Chippewa Falls put up some money but they got that money back into the community four fold. They made money for sure.

Tournaments also benefit the state's fishery resource by promoting catch-and-release fishing. In a sense, tournament participants view themselves as ambassadors of the fishing public.

The catch-and-release program started with the Bass Federation years ago and we got more bass now than we've ever had because of catch-and-release.

Bass anglers for the last 30 years practiced catch-and-release. Now it's really catching on. So for the last 30 years it grew as practicing catch-and-release and now we're all reaping the benefits.

The future is for the kids and if we can put these fish back for the kids, for their future and enjoyment, well, that's what catch-and-release is all about. To sustain the resource and make it stronger and better for the next generation...Catch-and-release fishing, for sure. It's getting pounded into people's heads.

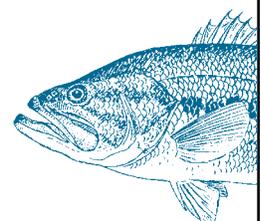
The bass fishing is fantastic because of the attitudes that are promoted by tournament anglers.

We as tournament anglers want the resource taken care of more than anybody. We want to catch them again.

As tournament fisherman we care more about the bass than the DNR does.

I think first and foremost the public needs to understand that we are more concerned about the fishery resource than the general public, than a lot of people who are making the big fuss about this. This is what we do, this is how we decide to spend our time and our lives. So we're concerned about the future of the fishery as much as anybody is and we want to continue to see it grow so we can continue to go out and have a good time.

We want to put back into the resource too... We're 100% catch-and-release. How is that bad for the resource?





Public Impressions of Tournament Anglers

Tournament participants believe they have a public image problem. They view themselves as true stewards of the resource and they want the public to have a similar understanding. They lay most of the blame for their poor image on the media coverage of DNR “mismanagement.”

Tournament participants want the public to know they care for the resource.

You look at the equipment we got, almost all of the tournaments you got today are no dead fish at the weigh-ins. These guys are handling them with kit gloves, they put ice in the live-wells, they got research, they got catch-and-release... They handle them as little as possible not to stress them because they want that for their bag at the end of the day.

We don't go out there with a malicious intent to hurt the fishery. We put them back so we can come back again.

I think the impression other people have is that we do hurt the resource, that we do have a bad intent. But we invite the public to the weigh-ins to see how we handle the fish, see what's going on.

Bad news sells and tournament participants believe the Department is (unintentionally) contributing to the bad news.

Nobody hears about Sturgeon Bay where only two fish total died out of 1,500. That's not in the paper.

They use every opportunity to crucify us for every bad result but they aren't looking at the positive results either.

The media the last two years, every view of us was ridiculous... What happened in La Crosse wasn't from us it was how the fish were kept in poor pens and where they were released. They were sentenced to death is what happened. It wasn't us. But that's not how the public saw it. DNR took fish out of water that was ten degrees cooler and moving eight times as fast and basically tossed them into a pond. It was disgusting. It wasn't management it was mismanagement.

DNR set it up as part of the pilot program. The pens were in a poor location. They should have been in the main river channel. There would have been some mortality just because of the low water level but nothing like the slaughter everyone saw, everyone around the country saw it. It was on Google news.

Participants also believe that their costly equipment is providing the public with a false image—that tournament participants

are wealthy individuals who can afford additional fees to cover tournament management and research expenses.

And don't think I have the money to pay these extra fees just because I have a \$35,000 boat. I live in a modest home—I don't have a million dollar cabin on a lake. It's what I do. But they think we can all afford it because they see the boats and trucks we have.

We're being blamed, being targeted for stuff they don't like. They say that we should pay for all this research because they see us with a \$35,000 boat and a \$35,000 truck and we can afford it. They say it costs the DNR \$70,000 to monitor these tournaments, and I say why us?

Participation in Fishing and the 2005 Season

This section addresses the objective of assessing fishing participation. Specifically it reports on the various practices of anglers, who anglers choose as their fishing companions,

when they go fishing, the fish they prefer to catch, any problems they encountered while fishing, where anglers obtain their information on fishing and Wisconsin's fishery resources, and overall assessments of the 2005 season as well as the job the DNR is doing managing the state's fishery resource.

Fishing Participation and Fish Pursued

To identify current anglers the questionnaire asked respondents if they did any fishing in Wisconsin in 2005. Results indicate that nearly everyone who purchased a license to fish in 2005 did so—98% responded “yes,” they fished in Wisconsin. (Results from questions which asked specifically about 2005 fishing experiences excluded the 2% that said they did not do any Wisconsin fishing in 2005.)

Respondents were asked how frequently they fished for various fish. A 4-point scale was used to measure frequency where 1 represents “never,” 2 represents “sometimes,” 3 represents “often,” and 4 represents “always.” The most sought after fish is panfish, but about one-half of anglers most frequently fish for anything they can catch. Overall, the

Table 10. Response of anglers regarding the frequency of fish pursued.

Fish	Mean score	Percent “never”	Percent “sometimes”	Percent “often” or “always”
Panfish	2.85	5	27	68
Any fish	2.64	15	36	49
Walleye or sauger	2.35	21	34	45
Northern pike	2.10	26	46	28
Largemouth bass	2.03	31	40	29
Smallmouth bass	1.95	34	42	24
Muskellunge	1.53	63	26	11
Catfish or bullheads	1.47	66	25	9
Inland trout	1.45	67	23	10
White bass or striped bass	1.43	65	27	8
Great Lakes trout or salmon	1.37	75	17	8
Rough fish	1.24	82	14	4

NOTE: Statistical differences in pursued fish between general anglers and tournament anglers were found for three fish. Tournament anglers were significantly more likely than general anglers to frequently fish for walleye (or sauger), northern pike, and Great Lakes trout or salmon (all significance levels at $p < .002$ or smaller).

mean scores range from “never” for rough fish to “often” for panfish (Table 10).

Table 10 highlights anglers’ varied interests in numerous fish. With two-thirds (68%) of the anglers reporting they “often” or “always” pursue panfish, it is the most frequently sought after fish. One-half of all anglers are truly generalists, as 49% “often” or “always” pursued no particular fish type. Not quite one-half (45%) of all anglers reported that they most frequently pursued walleye (or sauger).

One-fourth to nearly three in ten anglers “often” or “always” deliberately pursued northern pike (28%), largemouth bass (29%), and smallmouth bass (24%). Musky and inland trout, both which receive a great deal of attention within the angling public and the media, were most frequently pursued by approximately one angler in ten (10%). Catfish or bullheads, white bass or striped bass, Great Lakes trout or salmon, and rough fish were all frequently pursued by less than one angler in ten; rough fish was the least pursued type of fish with the vast majority of anglers (82%) saying they “never” pursue it.

The type of fish pursued was followed by two questions, (1) anglers’ favorite fish to catch (the fish they feel is their specialty); and (2) fish they most frequently catch. Panfish and walleye are about equally popular and panfish, the fish that many anglers are first introduced and is one of the most dispersed in Wisconsin, was the fish caught most often in Wisconsin waters.

Without question, anglers prefer to catch panfish and walleye more than any other fish. Approximately one-third of all anglers said their favorite fish to catch is panfish (34%) or walleye (32%) (Table 11). Largemouth bass was the preferred fish for about one angler in ten (9%). All other fish, including popular game fish such as northern pike, smallmouth

Table 11. Response of anglers regarding favorite fish to catch and the fish they catch most often (%).

Fish	Favorite fish to catch	Fish caught most often
Panfish	34%	58%
Walleye or sauger	32	12
Largemouth bass	9	8
Northern pike	6	5
Smallmouth bass	5	4
Muskellunge	4	1
Inland trout	3	3
Great Lakes trout or salmon	3	4
Catfish or bullheads	2	2
White bass or striped bass	1	1
Any fish	1	1
Rough fish	0	3

NOTE 1: Surprisingly, statistical differences were not found between general anglers and tournament anglers for their favorite fish to catch. Tournament anglers, however, were more likely than general anglers to have a preference for smallmouth bass (8% compared to 4%, respectively) and Great Lakes trout and salmon (8% compared to 1%, respectively).

NOTE 2: Likewise, statistical differences were not found between general anglers and tournament anglers for the fish they most often catch. Tournament anglers, however, were more likely than general anglers to catch Great Lakes trout and salmon (9% compared to 1%, respectively), and general anglers were more likely than tournament anglers to catch panfish (56% compared to 50%, respectively).

bass, musky, and Great lakes trout and salmon were most preferred by not more than about one angler in 20 (5%).

As for which fish is caught most often from Wisconsin waters, panfish is king. Nearly three anglers in five (58%) reported that they catch panfish more than any other fish (Table 11). As one might expect, given the fish’s popularity and deliberate pursuit by anglers, walleye are the next most commonly caught fish (12%). All other fish were most frequently caught by less than one angler in ten (less than 10%). Note that although rough fish are the preferred fish for less than 1% of the anglers, they are most frequently caught by 3% of anglers, probably indicative of the fish’s wide dispersal and high populations.

Fishing Practices

Fishing is a social activity. The questionnaire asked who the respondents most often fished with in 2005. The large majority of all anglers (85%) went fishing with family and/or friends.

Table 12 shows that general anglers and tournament anglers differed in their choice of fishing companions (chi square = 28.54, 5 df, $p < 0.001$). General anglers were significantly more likely than tournament anglers to fish exclusively with family members (37% compared to 14%, respectively). On the other hand, tournament anglers were more likely than general anglers to fish alone (19% compared to 13%, respectively), to fish with friends (27% compared to 19%, respectively), and to fish with friends and family combined (37% compared to 30%, respectively). Regardless of these differences, the vast majority of general anglers (86%) and of tournament anglers (81%) fish with a companion.

Respondents were asked how frequently in 2005 they fished using various bait types, including live bait, artificial lures, or fly fishing. Responses were on a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 represents “never,” 2 represents “sometimes,” 3 represents “often,” and 4 represents “always.” Live bait is used most often and flies are used least. Mean scores ranged from “often” for live bait to slightly more than “never” for flies.

Table 13 supports the prevalence of fishing with live bait. More than three-fourths of all anglers (77%) reported they most frequently fished in 2005 using live bait. In fact, very few anglers (3%) “never” fished with live bait.

Artificial lures and spinner baits were also commonly used by anglers. A majority of 53% of the anglers said they “often” or “always” used artificial lures or spinner baits. Less than one angler in ten (8%) said he or she “never” used such baits in 2005. Fly fishing was not widely practiced—eight anglers in ten (81%) reported they “never” used flies in 2005.

Table 12. Response of anglers (%) regarding most frequent fishing companions.

Fishing companions	General angler	Tournament angler	Total
Family	37%	14%	33%
Family and friends	30	37	32
Friends	19	27	20
Self	13	19	14
Business partners/clients	0	1	1
Fishing club members	0	2	1

Table 13. Response of anglers regarding frequency of use of various bait types.

Bait type	Mean score	Percent “never”	Percent “sometimes”	Percent “often” or “always”
Live bait	3.03	3	20	77
Artificial lures/spinner baits	2.57	8	39	53
Fly fishing	1.25	81	14	5

NOTE: A statistical difference between general anglers and tournament anglers was found for the use of artificial lures. Two-thirds (65%) of the tournament anglers, compared to one-half (50%) of the general anglers reported they “often” or “always” used artificial lures in 2005. No differences were found for the use of live bait or for fly fishing.

Respondents were asked from a list of five fishing platforms (or methods) which one they most frequently used. Platforms included fishing from a boat with a motor, fishing from a boat without a motor, wading, fishing on ice, and fishing from the shore (including dock or pier). Among all anglers, fishing from a boat with a motor was most common (60%) while wading was the least common (4%).

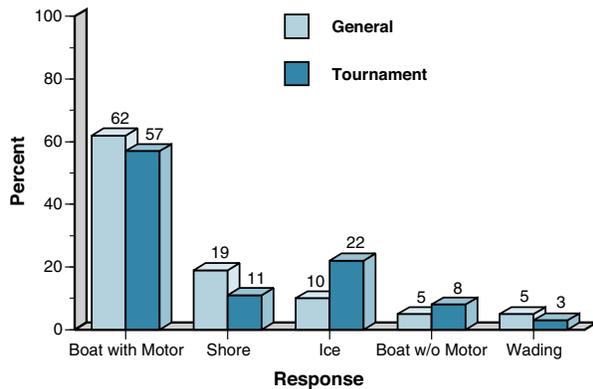


Figure 3. Response of anglers (%) regarding frequency of use of various fishing platforms.

Figure 3 illustrates that both general anglers (62%) and tournament anglers (57%) were most likely to fish from a boat with a motor. The angler types differ on two of the fishing platforms (chi square = 14.10, 4 df, $p < 0.007$). Fishing from the shore (or a pier or dock) was significantly more likely for general anglers (19%) than for tournament anglers (11%). Ice fishing, however, was significantly more common for tournament anglers (22%) than for general anglers (10%). Relatively small proportions of anglers (3% to 8%) most frequently fished from a boat without a motor or by wading. Both angler types were equally likely to use either of these methods.

Looking more specifically at ice fishing, respondents were asked if they spent more time ice fishing or open-water fishing. Results show that open water fishing is much more

popular than ice fishing, but ice fishing is significantly more popular with the tournament anglers than with the general anglers. Nearly three-fifths (59%) of the general anglers, compared to 23% of the tournament anglers reported that they did not do any ice fishing in 2005.

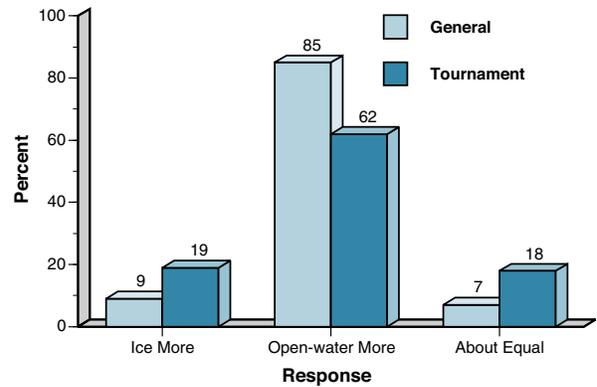


Figure 4. Response of anglers (%) regarding time spent ice fishing compared to open-water fishing.

Accounting for those who did not ice fish in 2005, **Figure 4 illustrates** the greater preference for ice fishing by tournament anglers than by general anglers (chi square = 24.71, 2 df, $p < 0.001$). About one-fifth (19%) of the tournament anglers compared to one-tenth (9%) of the general anglers reported that they spent more time ice fishing than open-water fishing. In contrast, more than eight in ten general anglers (85%) compared to three-fifths of the tournament anglers (62%) said they spent more time open-water fishing than ice fishing.

Respondents were also asked to what extent they practiced catch-and-release fishing. This was measured using a 5-point scale where 1 represents catching-and-releasing all fish, 3 represents keeping some fish and releasing others, and 5 represents keeping all legal fish. Overall, the mean score was 2.92, indicating that anglers typically keep some fish and release others.

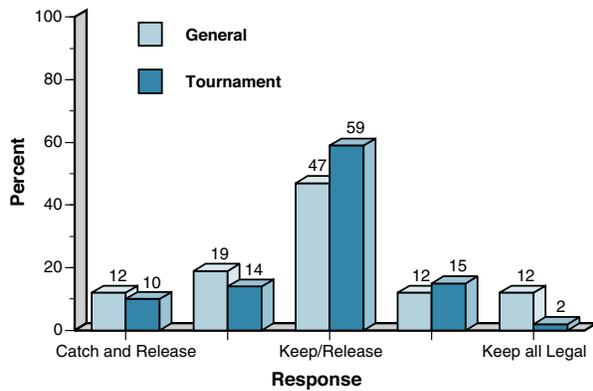


Figure 5. Response of anglers (%) regarding catch-and-release fishing compared to keeping all legal fish.

Although general anglers and tournament anglers differ statistically in their practices of catch-and-release fishing (chi square = 11.22, 4 df, $p < 0.024$), the statistics do not obviously differentiate the anglers. Slightly more general anglers (31%) than tournament anglers (24%) primarily or entirely practice catch-and-release fishing (Figure 5). General anglers were also found to be more likely than tournament anglers to keep all of the legal fish they catch—all or almost all legal fish were kept by 24% of the general anglers compared to 17% for the tournament anglers. The largest proportion of both angler types practice some combination of releasing some fish and keeping others. Forty-seven percent of the general anglers compared to a significantly higher 59% of the tournament anglers reported that they typically keep some fish and release others.

Fishing Frequency and Out-of-State Fishing

Respondents were asked how many days they spent part of the day fishing in Wisconsin during 2005. Responses ranged from one day to 300 days, with a mean of 34 days.

Looking at angler type, results in Figure 6 clearly show that tournament anglers fished more days during 2005 than did general anglers. One-third (32%) of the general anglers fished not more than ten days; 11% of the tour-

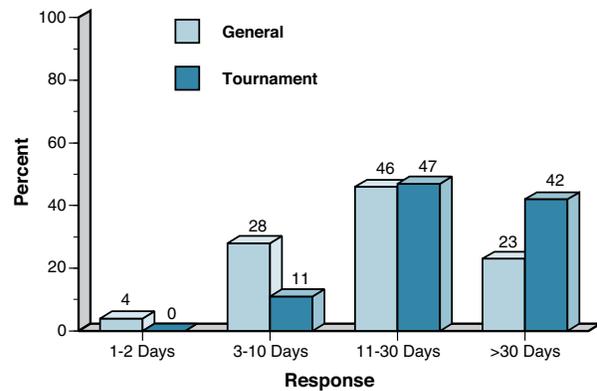


Figure 6. Response of anglers (%) regarding number of days spent fishing in 2005.

namer anglers fished 3 to 11 days and no tournament angler fished fewer than three days. The upper end of days fished is as one might expect; more than 30 days were spent fishing by 23% of the general anglers and 42% of the tournament anglers. Overall, tournament anglers fished nearly twice as many days as did general anglers. The mean number of days spent fishing was 29 for general anglers and 55 for tournament anglers (chi square = 22.75, 3 df, $p < 0.001$).

Given that tournament anglers spend more days fishing than do general anglers, it is not surprising that the data also show tournament anglers fishing more months of the year than do general anglers. Tournament anglers fished an average of seven months during 2005 while general anglers fished an average of five months.

Earlier findings noted that ice fishing was proportionally more popular with tournament anglers than with general anglers. This is further corroborated in Figure 7. Fishing from January through April and October through December was significantly more popular with tournament anglers (88%) than with general anglers (55%) (chi square = 35.20, 1 df, $p < 0.001$). No significant difference was found between angler types for fishing the summer months of May through

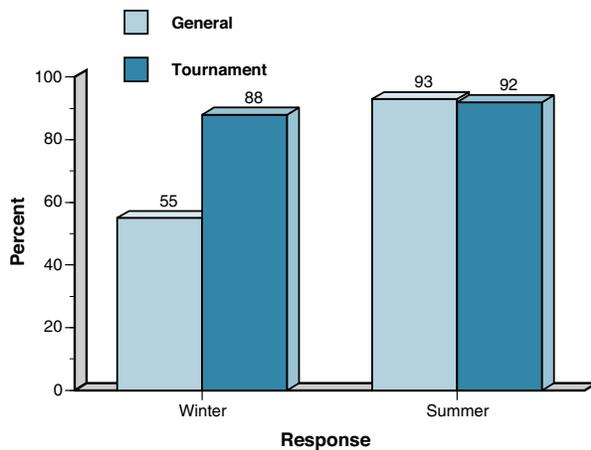


Figure 7. Response of anglers (%) regarding winter and summer months fished.

September—more than 90% of each angler type fished during the summer.

Research also shows that Wisconsin anglers tend to do their fishing in Wisconsin. Overall, about one angler in five (22%) reported that he or she did some fishing during 2005 outside of Wisconsin. Hence, more than three-fourths of all anglers (78%) did all of their fishing in Wisconsin (**Table 14**).

Table 14 also tells us that about one angler in ten (9%) fished in Canada. Fishing trips to Canada were proportionally equal for general and tournament anglers. Fishing in another state, however, was more popular with tournament

Table 14. Fishing outside of Wisconsin in 2005.

Location	General angler	Tournament angler	Total
Fished outside of Wisconsin	20%	30%	22%
Canada	10	10	9
Another state	11	22	13

anglers than with general anglers. Approximately one-fifth (22%) of the tournament anglers, compared to one-tenth (11%) of the general anglers, reported that they did some fishing in 2005 in another state (chi square = 8.06, 1 df, $p < 0.006$). Minnesota and Michigan were the most frequent outstate destinations for both general and tournament anglers.

Sources of Information

Respondents were presented a list of information sources about fishing and Wisconsin’s fish resources and asked how often in 2005 they obtained information from each source. Responses were on a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 represents “never,” 2 represents “sometimes,” 3 represents “often,” and 4 represents “always.” The most frequently relied on sources for information were friends or family followed by sporting goods, hardware, or bait stores.



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Table 15. Response of anglers regarding frequency of obtaining information from various sources.

Information source	Mean score	Percent “often” or “always”
Friends or family	2.34	46%
Sporting goods/ hardware/bait stores	2.10	29
Local newspapers	1.73	16
Magazines/books	1.70	16
TV or radio reports	1.51	9
DNR website	1.37	6
DNR publications	1.36	12
Other Internet websites	1.36	9
DNR conservation warden	1.23	3
Fishing club members	1.22	4
Fishing club publications	1.19	4
DNR service center front desk	1.14	1
DNR fish biologist	1.09	1

NOTE: Tournament anglers were statistically more likely than general anglers to obtain information from all sources listed in Table 15 (all significance levels at $p < .05$ or smaller). The two exceptions were local newspapers and television or radio reports where no statistical differences were found.

Table 15 highlights that anglers obtain information from a variety of sources. It’s worth noting that a majority of anglers did not “often” or “always” frequent a single information source. This likely underscores the availability of information from a wide variety of sources. It’s also worth noting that anglers rarely turn to the DNR for information, preferring perhaps more accessible sources (friends or family or local stores) or other similar sources (magazines and books over DNR publications).

Almost one-half of the anglers (46%) say they “often” or “always” obtain fishing-related information from their friends or family (Table 15). Just over one-fourth (29%) frequently obtain their information from sporting goods, hardware or bait stores. About one angler in six (16%) frequently obtain his or her information from local newspapers or books and magazines while a smaller proportion obtain their information from DNR publications (12%).

About one angler in ten (9%) frequently obtains his or her information from television or radio reports or from Internet websites other than the DNR. Interestingly, anglers are more likely to obtain fishing-related information from other websites than from the DNR website (6%). All other information sources were “often” or “always” relied on by less than one angler in 20 (or less than 5%).

Problems Encountered while Fishing

A list of 11 potential problems anglers might encounter while fishing in Wisconsin was included in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they encountered each problem. Frequency was measured by a 4-point scale where 1 represents “never,” 2 represents “sometimes,” 3 represents “often,” and 4 represents “always.” The problems most frequently encountered were not catching many fish and catching too



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Table 16. Response of anglers regarding frequency of problems encountered while fishing.

Problem "often"	Mean score	Percent or "always"
Not catching many fish	2.25	30%
Catching too many small fish	2.20	35
Poor behavior by other water users	1.90	20
Crowding—too many users on water	1.86	19
Water quality	1.77	13
Others keeping too many fish	1.72	18
Public access to water	1.71	15
Poor/inadequate fish habitat	1.71	12
Worry about toxins in fish	1.67	16
Complicated regulations	1.65	14
Daily bag limit is too small	1.54	12

NOTE: Statistical differences between general anglers and tournament anglers were not found for any of the potential problems listed in Table 16. In other words, any of the problems were likely to be encountered or not encountered regardless of angler type.

many small fish. Overall, the mean scores indicate that anglers "sometimes" encounter at least one of the problems, but rarely is a problem frequently encountered (Table 16).

Table 16 indicates that no problem was "often" or "always" encountered by a majority of anglers. Approximately one-third of the anglers frequently encountered problems of catching too many small fish (35%) and not catching many fish (30%). One angler in five frequently encountered poor behavior by water recreationists (20%), crowding on the water (19%), and other anglers keeping too many fish (18%). No other problem was reported by more than one angler in five. The problem least encountered was the daily bag limit—just over one angler in ten (12%) thought the daily bag limit for whatever he or she was fishing for was too small.

When asked which of the 11 problems anglers believed to be most serious, the two problems most frequently cited were, as expected, not

catching many fish (17%) and catching too many small fish (16%). Note that these top two problems were cited by fewer than one angler in five, indicating that no single problem overwhelms those who enjoy fishing.

Satisfaction with the 2005 Season and Overall Assessment of the DNR's Fish Management Program

The questionnaire included a standardized question to assess anglers' overall satisfaction with the 2005 season. Figure 8 illustrates that the vast majority of anglers were satisfied with their Wisconsin fishing experiences in 2005.

Approximately three anglers in ten (31%) reported they were very satisfied with their 2005 fishing experiences in Wisconsin; more than eight anglers in ten (84%) reported they were either satisfied or very satisfied (Figure 8). Fishing in Wisconsin in 2005 was disappointing for 16% of the anglers. Based on a 4-point scale where 1 equals "not at all satisfied," 2 equals "not too satisfied," 3 equals "satisfied," and 4 equals "very satisfied," the mean score was 3.1, equivalent to being satisfied.

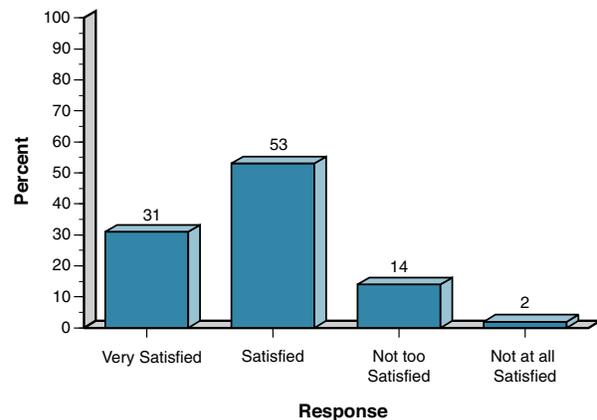


Figure 8. Response of anglers (%) regarding satisfaction with fishing in 2005.

NOTE: A statistical difference between general anglers and tournament anglers for their satisfaction ratings was not found. In other words, tournament anglers were just as satisfied or dissatisfied with their fishing experiences as were general anglers.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to grade the DNR for the job it's doing managing Wisconsin's fishery resource. A traditional 4-point grading scale was provided where 0 represents a failing grade of an "F," 2 represents a passing grade of "C," and a 4 represents an "A." The overall mean score was 2.7, equivalent to a B-.

Figure 9 is evidence that more anglers are satisfied than dissatisfied with the job the DNR is doing managing the state's fishery resource. Two-thirds (65%) of the anglers give the DNR a grade of an A or a B. Three anglers in ten (30%) gave the DNR a grade of a C, indicating they thought the DNR was doing an acceptable job. Only one angler in 20 (5%) thought the DNR was doing a poor (4%) or failing job (1%).

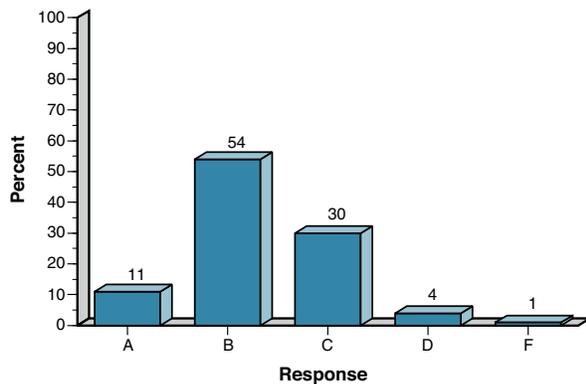


Figure 9. Response of anglers (%) regarding the grade they would give the Wisconsin DNR fish management program.

NOTE: Grades for how well the DNR is doing managing the state's fishery resources did not differ by angler type. In other words, tournament anglers were just as likely as general anglers to offer high or low grades.

During the focus groups tournament participants were asked to offer an overall assessment of Wisconsin's fishery resource. Put another way, if they were describing fishing in Wisconsin to a new visitor to the state, what would they say? Without exception, they praised the state's fishery resource as "awesome" and "fantastic."

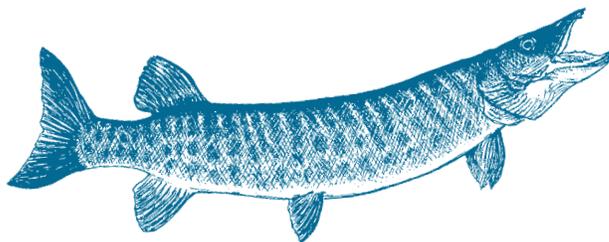
The fishery is fantastic. It really is great and it keeps getting better. What do you want to fish for? You can probably do it in Wisconsin and it will be good.

The walleye fishing is flourishing. The perch are coming back. The muskies are flourishing. The northern are flourishing. The salmon are doing quite well. It's all unreal.

It's awesome. The bass fishing is just phenomenal. If you can go out in a day... on the Wisconsin River the other day I caught 15 pounds worth of smallmouth in just a couple hours. To have that much fun, catch that many fish, it was such a great day and that wasn't unusual.

Asked specifically about bass fishing in Wisconsin, the participants had nothing but high praise for the "unreal" opportunities in their own "backyard."

I'm a fishing tackle rep. I cover the state selling fishing tackle so I'm in a lot of big tackle shops. I see what's going on. We have a world class fishery right in our backyard.



Not just this, but Chequamegon Bay, a lot of inland lakes in north central Wisconsin. It's phenomenal. And the word is just getting out now because even when I started in this 20 years ago in north central Wisconsin, it was all walleyes, muskie. Smallmouth bass was just, nobody cared about or they didn't whatever, but they're actually fishing for them now and they're finding some really big fish...As an example, that's world class fishery, this whole state.

I think bass fishing in Wisconsin generally has really picked up, it's unreal. I mean this body of water here is just phenomenal. If you went here 20 years ago you'd catch smallmouth bass but you wouldn't catch bass like you're catching now. I mean, there's people and all these guys are fishing next to each other, and they're cranking these fish in, and they keep coming in and there's lots of fish out here.

The weights in the tournaments have gone up and that's a sign that the fishery has improved.

Commitment to Fishing

This section looks at anglers' commitment to fishing. Commitment was measured via a direct question asking how important fishing is to their lives as well as through questions of fishing frequency over time.

Importance of Fishing to Anglers' Lives

The questionnaire asked respondents how much they would miss fishing if they could no longer participate. Response options included "not miss it at all," "miss it slightly," "miss it more than most of your other activities," and "miss it more than all of your other activities."

Results show that anglers are committed to fishing. Overall, 61% said if they could no longer go fishing, they would miss it more than most or all of their other activities. Results also indicate that, as one might expect, anglers who participate in tournament fishing show a statistically higher degree of commitment than do general anglers. Three-fourths (75%) of the tournament anglers, compared to 57% of the general anglers, said they would miss fishing more than most or all of their other activities if they could no longer participate (chi square = 10.28, 1 df, $p < 0.001$) (Figure 10).

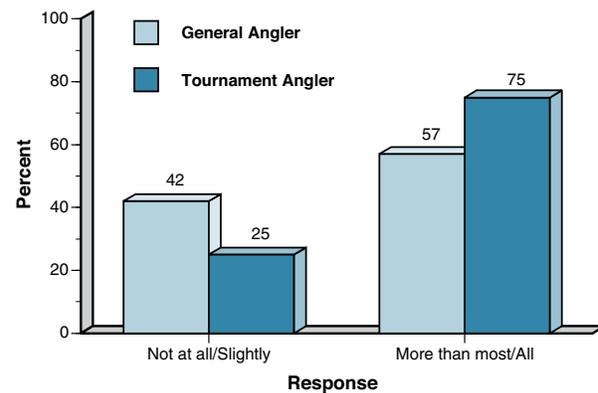


Figure 10. Response of anglers (%) regarding their commitment to fishing.

Just how committed to bass tournaments are the participants? When asked, "What, if anything, would prevent you from participating in bass tournaments?" the response theme was nothing, other than death, would prevent them from competing.

Nothing. Well, I suppose I'd have to pass away.

I'd have to be dead to stop.

Nothing. As far as I'm concerned we're going to have tournaments whether you like it or not. We're going to have them anyways.

We're just not gonna let you know we're having them. We may have a group of 20 guys that get together and go to a lake and decide that we're gonna have a big fish fry afterwards just to spite you.

We're pretty damn committed to our tournaments. We'll get a group together, throw some money in the pot, or not, and have our own.

Participation over the Last Five Years

A second measure of commitment to fishing is an angler's consistency in fishing from year to year. The questionnaire asked in which years, from 2001 to 2005, did the respondent do any fishing in Wisconsin. Overall results show that more than three-fourths of anglers (79%) did some fishing in Wisconsin in each of the preceding five years. And as seen in the previous finding, tournament anglers show a higher degree of commitment to fishing by fishing all five years than do general anglers. **Figure 11 illustrates** that more than nine in ten (93%) tournament anglers, compared to just over three-fourths (78%) of general anglers, fished in Wisconsin each year from 2001 through 2005 (chi square = 12.37, 4 df, $p < 0.01$).

Change in Fishing Frequency over Time

Another question asked if the number of days fished in a year has been increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same. Overall, the largest proportion of anglers, 45%, felt the number of days they fish in a year has been staying about the same. Nearly equal proportions of anglers reported that the number of days fished per year has been increasing (26%) and decreasing (29%).

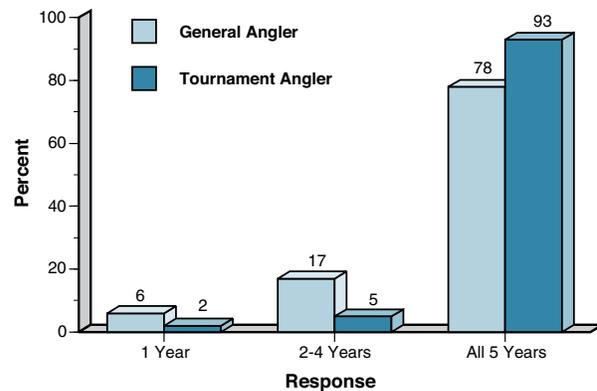


Figure 11. Response of anglers (%) regarding years fished from 2001 through 2005.

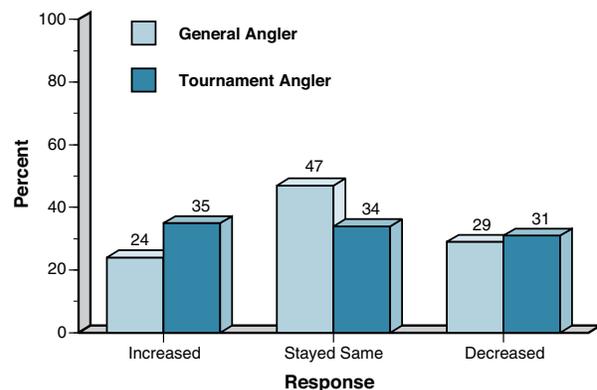


Figure 12. Response of anglers (%) to the question "Has number of fishing days increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?"

Consistent with the previous findings, tournament anglers are more likely than general anglers to report an increase in the number of days fished in a year (**Figure 12**). Just over one-third (35%) of tournament anglers, compared to one-fourth (24%) of general anglers, reported that the number of days they fish in a year has been increasing (chi square = 6.79, 2 df, $p < 0.03$). Nearly equal proportions of tournament and general anglers said their fishing frequency has been declining.

Primary Reason for Declining Fishing Days

Respondents who reported they were spending less days fishing were asked to select from a list of nine possible reasons the one primary reason for the decline. **Table 17** indicates that nearly one-half (47%) of all anglers said they did not have enough time. A relatively small proportion reported that their decline in fishing was because fishing was not as good (14%) or because they had other interests they enjoyed more (11%). Very few anglers attributed their decline in fishing to the regulations being too restrictive (2%), inability to obtain access to water (2%), poor water quality (2%), crowded water conditions (2%), or having no one to go fishing with (1%). Approximately one angler in five (19%) had another reason for his or her decline in fishing, including moving to a new location, not having a boat, costs, poor weather, and poor ice conditions to name a few.



Jordan Petchenik

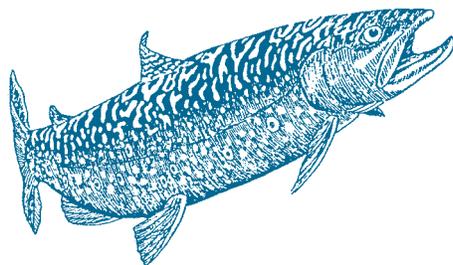
Table 17. Response of anglers (%) regarding primary reasons for declining days spent fishing.

Primary reason	Percent reporting
Not enough time	47%
Fishing is not as good	14
Other more enjoyable interests	11
Regulations too restrictive	2
Access to water has declined	2
Water quality has declined	2
Water is too crowded	2
No one to go with	1
Another reason?	19

NOTE: A statistical difference was not found between tournament and general anglers for a decline in fishing frequency.

Affiliation with Fishing Clubs

Although tournament anglers are statistically more likely than general anglers to belong to a fishing club (chi square = 9.6, 4 df, $p < 0.05$), overall, nine out of ten anglers (91%) do not belong to any club. Specifically, 95% of the general anglers and 89% of the tournament anglers said they are not affiliated with a fishing club. Five percent of the general anglers and 11% of the tournament anglers belong to one or more fishing clubs. A statistical difference in membership of the various club types was not found.



Respondent Background

This section is intended to help understand who responded to the survey. It summarizes eight socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Wisconsin anglers are primarily married men near 50 years old; they live in rural areas, have household incomes under \$75,000, and have less than a 2-year college or trade school degree (Table 18).

Table 18 shows that the vast majority of anglers are male (81%) and are married (77%). The average age of the angler is 48 and about three in ten (29%) are at least 60 years old. The majority has some college experience (69%), but a minority has completed a bachelor's degree or higher (25%). Income is well distributed with 36% residing in households with annual incomes of at least \$75,000 and 40% residing in households with annual incomes of less than \$50,000. Approximately one-half (49%) reside in a self-described rural area of Wisconsin. A minority of 30% has children aged five to 17 residing in their home. Of those with children, three-fourths (76%) say that all of their children have gone fishing in the 12 months prior to the survey.

NOTE 1: Two statistically significant characteristics distinguish tournament anglers from general anglers—gender and age. Males comprise a higher percentage of tournament anglers (92%) than general anglers (78%). Tournament anglers are slightly younger than general anglers. The mean age of the tournament angler is 43 and 30% are at least 50 years old. The mean age of the general angler is 48 and 50% are at least 50 years old. Statistical differences between tournament and general anglers were not found for any other socio-demographic characteristics.

NOTE 2: Tournament fishing can be a costly endeavor. A boat and vehicle to pull the boat can easily exceed \$60,000. In addition, the tournament angler must cover equipment, travel, and often lodging expenses as well as tournament entrance fees. Despite the high costs often associated with tournament fish-

Table 18. Socio-demographic characteristics of responding anglers.

Attribute	Total
Gender (see NOTE 1)	
Male	81%
Female	19
Age (see NOTE 1)	
Under 30	11%
30 – 39	14
40 – 49	22
50 – 59	24
60 +	29
Mean age	48 yrs
Education (highest level)	
Less than high school diploma	6%
High school diploma or GED	26
Some college/trade school	30
Two-year assoc. or trade degree	14
Four-year college degree	16
Post-graduate studies/degree	9
Income (see NOTE 2)	
Less than \$25,000	13%
\$25,000 – \$49,999	27
\$50,000 – \$74,999	24
\$75,000 – \$99,999	20
\$100,000 +	16
Residency	
Urban	21%
Suburban	29
Rural	49
Marital status	
Married/living with partner	77%
Single/divorced/widowed	23
Children aged 5 – 17	
0	70%
1	14
2 +	16
Children that fish	
None	13%
Some	11
All	76

ing, tournament anglers are not wealthy individuals. Only 20% of tournament anglers live in households with annual incomes of \$100,000 or more and this includes the 19 respondents that fish open water bass tournaments.

Statewide Boater Survey

Awareness of and Participation in Tournament Fishing

This section addresses the objective of assessing awareness by water users of tournament fishing as well as their participation in tournament fishing.

As in the statewide angler survey, respondents were asked if prior to receiving the questionnaire they were aware that permitted fishing tournaments occur in Wisconsin. **Figure 13 shows** that a majority (73%) of all water recreation users were aware of permitted fishing tournaments in Wisconsin. Angler awareness of permitted tournaments was significantly greater (75%) than non-angler awareness (63%) (chi square = 6.77, 1 df, $p < 0.008$).

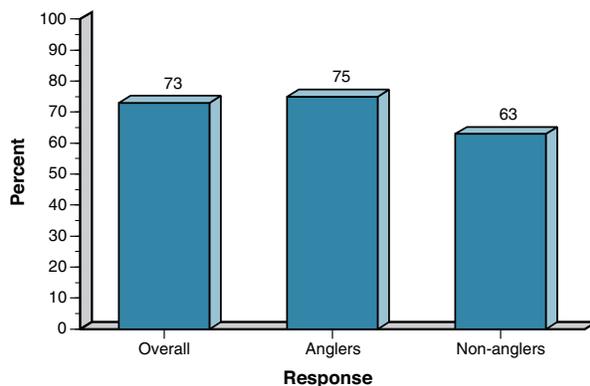


Figure 13. Response of boaters (%) regarding awareness of tournament fishing in Wisconsin.

The two questionnaires asked for the respondents' awareness of "permitted" tournaments. Riparians, however, addressed their tournament awareness in general terms—they were aware of tournaments on their water but did not speak to permitted or non-permitted tournaments.

I don't think there's public notice. But if you go to the Amoco you'll see a posting

that they're looking for participants or you can keep track when you drive by Babcock Park. You can always tell if a tournament is going on by the people who are camping in the park and the vehicles and boats that are there. The campground fills up with tournament fishermen.

...I can hear those guys take off because they all go at once. My wife says, 'What in the world was that?' and I tell her, 'It must be a fishing tournament.'

During the summer months we see a tournament probably every week, mostly from the local clubs...maybe 15 to 20 boats. They got the big engines and everything else, and they'll launch from over here and buzz all the way across the lake to where the springs are and the weed beds and then they'll start working back as it gets closer to the end they'll start working the shoreline and the piers so they're in and out.

When you see the big boats take off at two or three at a time then you know a tournament is going.

It's really easy to tell because the parking lot is full by 6 a.m. and filled with pick-up trucks and trailers with glitter and stickers... You see a whole bunch of them, maybe 15 really nice looking boats, like no other boats on the water...

Riparians suggested that advance notice of a tournament would be appreciated. Contacting the lake association was suggested as a preferable method.

Being outside of the tournament loop we don't know when the tournaments are going to happen. We do have a web page with a calendar, and I think it would be beneficial

if the permitted tournaments that were scheduled; we got notification so we could put it on the calendar. So everyone will know what's going on, when the tournaments are scheduled. So they are pre-warned and understand what's going on. And if there are problems with the tournament, they see unsafe practices or they're discourteous, they'll be more likely to report it because they'll know who it is.

A little heads up would be good because if you were planning on going fishing the day of the tournament you might decide to go to another lake where it might be quieter.

If you contact us, like maybe an e-mail or letter to our association, telling us that you were holding a tournament and include the days and times and maybe what the tournament was for, like for walleye or musky, then we would know in advance. We could plan for it.

Respondents were subsequently asked if they ever participated in any kind of a fishing tournament. **Figure 14 illustrates** that about one user in five (21%) has participated in a permitted and/or non-permitted fishing tournament. Among anglers, approximately one-fourth (24%) have participated in some kind of fishing tournament. This participation rate is slightly higher than that reported from the angler survey (17%) probably due to differences in question wording; the angler survey asked specifically about permitted tournaments while the water recreation survey asked about any tournament.

Although about one-fourth of all users reported that they've participated in a fishing tournament, a slight majority (51%) said they have been on the water while a permitted tournament was in progress as a non-participant (**Figure 15**). Similar to results from the angler survey, results show that being on the water during a permitted tournament as a non-participant was significantly more common for tournament anglers (70%) than for general anglers (48%) and non-anglers (35%) (chi square = 26.17, 4 df, $p < 0.001$).

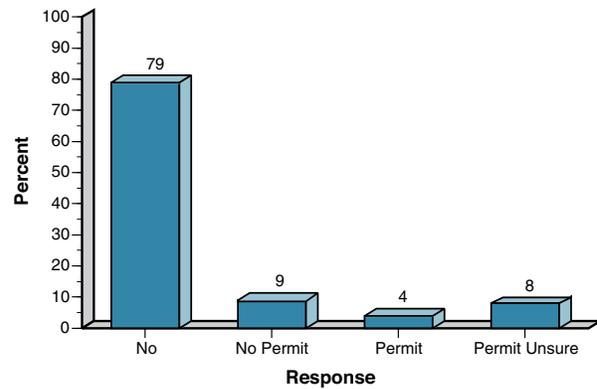


Figure 14. Response of boaters (%) regarding participation in tournament fishing.

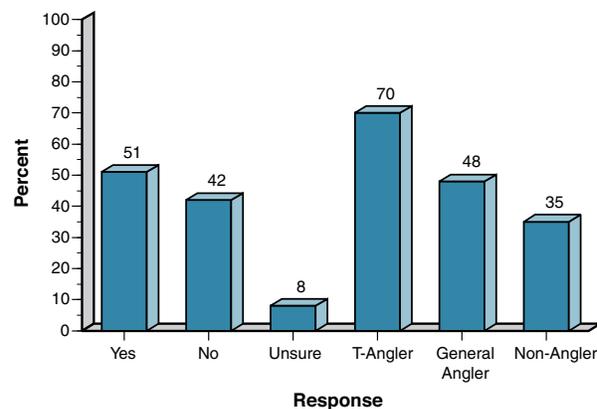


Figure 15. Response of boaters (%) regarding if they have been on the water during tournament as a non-participant.

Respondents who said they had been on the water as a non-participant during a permitted fishing tournament were asked how they knew the tournament required a permit. **Table 19 reports** that the greatest proportion of respondents learned the tournament was permitted because they heard about it through the media.

Almost one-half of respondents (47%) who said they had been on the water as a non-participant during a permitted fishing tournament knew the tournament was permitted by hearing about it through the media. Two respondents in five (40%) knew (or more appropriately, assumed) the tournament was permitted based on the increased number of boats on the water. A little more than one-fourth of the respondents (27%) reported that someone other than a participant told them while one-fifth of the respondents (20%) were informed by a tournament participant. A small percentage (8%) of on-water non-participants were informed by going to the weigh-in, and a nearly equal proportion (9%) were informed some other way. (Responses included sponsorship signage, size and style of boats, and early morning preparations followed by noise.)

The on-water non-participants were additionally asked if they thought the tournament affected their time on the water in any way. Responses were measured on a 4-point scale where 1 represented a “negative affect,” 2 rep-

resented “no affect,” 3 represented a “positive affect,” and 4 represented “unsure.” The seven “unsure” responses were omitted allowing for “cleaner” analyses. The overall mean score was 1.80, closest to “no affect” but indicating a leaning toward a negative rather than a positive affect.

Figure 16 illustrates that for a majority of all water users (63%), being on the water during a tournament did not interfere with their recreational pursuits. However, a greater proportion of water users said the tournament had a negative affect (29%) rather than a positive affect (8%) during their time on the water.

Significant differences were found between anglers who have participated in fishing tournaments and anglers that have not. More tournament anglers (16%) than general anglers (5%) reported that the tournament had a positive affect on their time on the water. Conversely, more general anglers (32%) than tournament anglers (22%) reported that the tournament had a detrimental affect on their time on the water.

Table 19. *Reponse of boaters (%) regarding how they were informed of a permitted tournament.*

Information source	Percent reporting
Heard through the media	47%
A lot more boats on the water	40
Non-participant told me	27
A participant told me	20
Went to the weigh-in	8
Found out another way	9

NOTE: No differences in information sources were found between anglers and non-anglers. A statistical difference between angler types was found for two items. Learning of a permitted tournament by going to the weigh-in was of greater significance for tournament anglers (18%) than for general anglers (4%) (chi square = 10.82, 1 df, $p < 0.001$). More general anglers (44%) than tournament anglers reported learning of a permitted tournament by observing an increase in the number of boats on the water (chi square = 3.91, 1 df, $p < 0.05$).

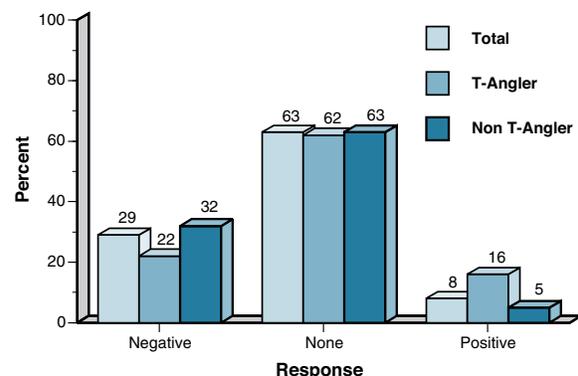


Figure 16. *Response of boaters (%) regarding impact a tournament has on time spent on water.*

NOTE 1: Statistical differences were not found between anglers and non-anglers.

NOTE 2: Response cells were too small to allow analyses by recreation type.

Observations of Tournament Fishing

The questionnaire included 13 statements about permitted fishing tournaments. Respondents that indicated they had been on the water during a permitted fishing tournament as a non-participant were asked to indicate whether they thought each statement was true or false. Responses were measured using a 5-point scale where 1 represents “definitely false,” 3 represents “neutral,” and 5 represents “definitely true.” Overall, means were near the “neutral” response but ranged from 2.08 indicating disagreement with the statement to 3.67, indicating neutrality but leaning towards agreement.

Looking at tournament conduct, a majority of respondents identified three statements as being either true or false (Table 20). Slightly more than one-half reported that tournament boats and trailers caused overcrowding in the

parking lots (56%) and that tournament boats congested the boat ramps (54%). Interestingly, although a majority felt crowded in the parking lots and at the boat ramps, about one-third of the respondents (34%) said they felt crowded on the water because of the tournament. Also, just over one-half (55%) reported that the tournament did not cause them to leave the water. One-respondent in five (20%), however, was displaced from the water because of the tournament, that is, the tournament caused them to leave the water.

A relatively high proportion of respondents agreed (45%) that tournament boats kept a safe distance from their boat, but a significant minority disagreed (30%)—they thought tournament boats operated too close to their boat. Creating large wakes and operating at safe speeds were also somewhat problematic. More respondents agreed that tournament boats created large wakes (41%) than disagreed (28%)

Table 20. Response of boaters (%) regarding observations of numerous aspects of fishing tournaments.

Observation	Percent true	Percent neutral	Percent false	Mean
Tournament conduct				
Tournament boat trailers and vehicles overcrowded the parking lots	56%	27%	17%	3.67
Tournament boats congested the boat ramps	54	26	21	3.57
Tournament boats kept a safe distance from my boat	45	25	30	3.23
Tournament boats created large wakes	41	30	28	3.17
Tournament boats overcrowded the water	34	36	30	3.07
Tournament boats operated at safe speeds	36	24	40	2.88
Tournament boats are ruder than other user groups on the water	26	36	38	2.76
The tournament caused me to leave the water	20	25	55	2.34
Tournament goodwill				
Because of the tournament I knew the water must have some large fish	23	54	23	2.98
I saw large fish caught by participants	27	34	39	2.79
Watching tournament boats on the water helped tell me where to fish	24	43	33	2.76
I saw techniques being used by tournament participants to catch fish	22	31	47	2.52
I received advice from a tournament participant on how to better fish the water	13	26	61	2.08

NOTE 1: A statistical difference was found between anglers and non-anglers for one of the 13 statements. Anglers (29%) were more likely than non-anglers (9%) to observe large fish being caught by tournament participants.

NOTE 2: Response cells were too small to allow analyses by recreation type.

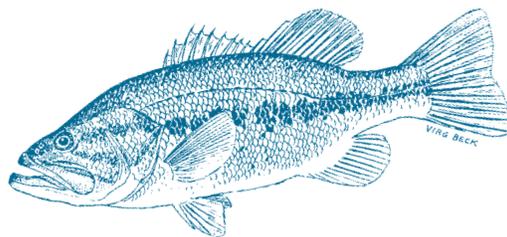
and slightly more respondents disagreed that tournament boats operated at safe speeds (40%) than agreed with the statement (36%). Lastly, although one-fourth (26%) of the respondents agreed that tournament boats are more rude than other users of the water, a modal response of 38% disagreed. A comprehensive view of the results indicates that tournaments are not without their problems. Although many of the statements were non-issues for a majority of the respondents, the minority that did report a problem is not negligible.

Looking at tournament goodwill indicates that tournaments did little for drawing attention to the water body or for educating other anglers. Only 13% reported that they received advice from a tournament participant on how to better fish the water. Further, about one-fourth of the respondents reported they: saw large fish caught by tournament participants (27%); watched tournament boats to identify where on the water they should fish (24%); presumed the water must hold large fish because of the tournament (23%); and observed techniques being used to catch fish by participants (22%).

Not surprisingly, of all water users, tournament anglers probably benefited the most and were most positive about being on the water as a non-participant during a permitted tournament. Specifically, results show that

tournament anglers and general anglers differ on several of their observations. Tournament anglers were more likely than general anglers to report that by being on the water during a tournament as a non-participant they experienced the following:

- identified where on the water they should fish (30% compared to 21%, respectively, chi square = 11.11, 4 df, $p < 0.025$)
- received advice from participants on how to better fish the water (25% compared to 8%, respectively, chi square = 16.86, 4 df, $p < 0.002$)
- observed techniques being used by participants to catch fish (41% compared to 14%, respectively, chi square = 26.39, 4 df, $p < 0.001$)
- saw large fish being caught by participants (43% compared to 21%, respectively, chi square = 15.32, 4 df, $p < 0.004$)
- observed participants keeping a safe distance from their own boats (52% compared to 40%, respectively, chi square = 9.85 4 df, $p < 0.043$)
- observed participants operating at safe speeds (48% compared to 31%, respectively, chi square = 10.08 4 df, $p < 0.039$)



The interviews with riparians asked about any problems they may have experienced from fishing tournaments. Responses were mixed. For some riparians, even after many years of living on a lake, tournaments have never been a problem. Other riparians, however, have found tournaments to be problematic because of engine noise and inconsiderate behavior toward other water users at the tournament's start.

Tournaments are not a problem for some riparians.

Living on the lake, my husband and I have not noticed any real problems from tournaments now. No, absolutely none.

No, these guys that fish here are pretty good. They go in and out with their electric motors and they're pretty good.

If you pay attention you know they're out there and other than when they start it's no big deal. Up here, we got some big fish and so we get some big fishing and they have a right to the lake just like anyone else.

I retired here 16 years ago and I like to fish—one of the reasons why I bought here. So I ought to know if they're causing problems and I can't say that they are. I'd like to know where they're finding all those fish!

Loud engine noise at the start of the tournament bothers other waterfront property owners.

There have been shotgun starts at six in the morning that I can hear from my house nowhere near the starting point and I can hear those guys take off because they all go at once.

The start of the tournament is probably their most offensive aspect because they start revving their engines at 5:15. There are other aspects but you have to understand and accept that there are going to be anglers and other people doing things and you can't totally close the lake down for lakefront owners only.

As someone who used to live five houses up from Babcock Park if you had your window open on Saturday morning you hear them putting in or you have someone out at the buoy signaling when it's time to start, well, when they go, they go.

And the other thing that would come out of it, to have the big power boats getting ready at 5:30 in the morning, rather than one ski boat. That could be a bit much.

The tournaments that we have now, you can hear them with their engines and you can see them zipping across the water.

Riparians also cited inconsiderate behavior by tournament participants toward other water users, particularly at the tournament's start.

During the tournament when we were skiers you could guarantee that you'd lose your skiing lane because they had to get from the start at point A to point B so just a little more courtesy towards others that are early morning users would be nice.

There's no consideration of who's where on the water and what other water users are doing.

Plus, if you're sitting out on your pier, there were times when they were rude when they

were fishing because they're in and out and around your piers. As a group they were not as courteous as you'd think they would be. I never felt these small tournaments were very well run.

One riparian who launches his boat from a location other than his home has found parking lots congested with tournament boats and trailers.

An off the water issue for me is parking and launching my boat. To go to Babcock Park on a Saturday and find every stall filled is really annoying and then I have to go around the lake to find another cite where I can launch and park.

To place potential problems from tournament boats in perspective with other water recreations, respondents were asked how much of a problem, if at all, 11 different watercrafts have been for them on Wisconsin waters in 2006. Responses were measured using a 4-point scale where 1 represents “no problem,” 2 represents “slight,” 3 represents “moderate,” and 4 represents a “serious”

problem. Mean scores ranged from 1.0 to 2.1, indicating that no water recreation was considered by the respondents to be a “serious” or even a “moderate” problem.

Table 21 indicates that, overall, tournament fishing boats were no more of a problem for water users than were other fishing boats. Just under one respondent in ten (8%) reported that tournament boats as well as other fishing boats were a “moderate” or “serious” problem. Less than 10% (9%) said these boats were the biggest problem on Wisconsin waters. It’s important to note that tournament boats were not at all a problem for about eight respondents in ten (79%), results nearly equal to those for pontoons and houseboats (83% no problem, mean score 1.2).

Respondents identified three watercrafts as being significantly more problematic than tournament fishing boats. Personal watercrafts were reported as a problem by 60% of the respondents; 40% reported them as being “moderate” to “serious” problems, and 45% said they were the biggest problem. Waterskiers and ski boats were reported as being a “slight” to “serious” problem for about one-half (49%) of the respondents; they were

Table 21. Response of boaters (%) regarding problems encountered with watercrafts.

Potential problem	Percent no problem	Percent slight problem	Percent moderate or serious problem	Percent biggest problem	Mean score
Personal watercrafts	41%	20%	40%	45%	2.1
Waterskiers or ski boats	51	28	21	20	1.8
Motor/Speed boats	52	27	21	11	1.7
Tournament fishing boats	79	13	8	9	1.3
Other fishing boats	70	22	8	9	1.4
Cabin cruisers	90	5	5	3	1.2
Pontoons or houseboats	83	14	3	2	1.2
Sailboats	93	5	2	1	1.1
Rowboats, canoes, kayaks	96	3	1	1	1.1
Windsurfers	96	3	1	1	1.1
Inflatable boats or rafts	98	2	0	0	1.0

NOTE 1: Statistical differences were not found between anglers and non-anglers or between tournament anglers and general anglers.

NOTE 2: Response cells were too small to allow analyses by recreation type.

most problematic for one-fifth (20%) of the respondents. Speedboats were also reported as being a “slight” to “serious” problem for about one-half (48%) of the respondents (Table 21).

Tournament participants from the focus groups support survey results—jet skis can be problematic for other water users. Conflicts with riparians, however, were most troubling to the tournament participants.

The only water user that we've had a conflict with is the jet skis. We fish the shoreline a lot and they will try to go between us and the shore sometimes.

The people who don't like you will run their boats between you and the shore... more often than not jet skis. Some do it on purpose.

They [personal watercrafts] are the worst, really the only ones I've had a problem with. I don't know if they think because they're small they can go wherever they want but they really create a wake and they just don't seem to care.

Tournament participants were most vocal about their interactions with waterfront property owners.

Property owners think they own the lake. You'll be fishing a lake, near one of their docks and they'll come right out and say, 'What the hell are you doing near my dock? Don't fish here.' And that's real nice.

I had a property owner come out with a shotgun on Shawano Lake. He just threatened to shoot if I didn't move.

I've gone to lakes where boat trailers have been chained to guard railings and landings to keep people from going there, which is all property owners. I've run into that at least a half dozen times.

I think all we're doing at this point is fighting landowners who don't like what we're doing. There's some rich landowners on the lakes that don't like us on their lakes. Well, it's not their lake alone. It's everybody's, belongs to all of us. Don't tell me you own the lake just because you had enough money to purchase a beautiful piece of land on the lake... But there are guys that will scream at you, 'This is my territory!' Most times I wouldn't go near if he was fishing. I go right around him. But some come running from their house ready to throw a fit.

There's a big difference between lakes with landowners and lakes with fisherman that are landowners. The guy that buys his vacation home and thinks that's all his water, he's definitely going to come out and raise a fit. But you go out on other waters and they come out and talk to you, some cheer when they see you catch a fish near their dock or in front of their house.

How many of the property owners that scream about us catching their bass go out themselves and catch 25 bluegills, go home, throw them in their freezer and then go back out to get 25 more, all while they're spawning? There needs to be some equality with the rules we all are supposed to follow.

These participants, as well as their group as a whole, have the impression that a riparian's pier is public property because it extends over a public resource.

I think we as fishermen understand what our rights are, what our limits are, a lot better than what a landowner understands what his rights are. Apparently they don't understand the limitations of their property and what is actually public use land. And I think they need a better grasp of their rights before they start taking shots at us, saying that we're the ones in the wrong...If they knew what the laws were they'd see that they don't have any beef with us. They may have complaints but not legal ones.

If a landowner is out there and says, 'Don't go on my dock,' well, it's not his dock. He may have put it in but it's in public water. I mean if you wanted to you could go up and fish off it. But it's just common courtesy to take it easy and just stay away.

If it's on public water it's a public right. So if that's where I need to go, to get onto, I have the right to do that.

These participants noted that interference from other water users or from riparians is probably not motivated by a dislike of tournaments.

They don't do it because I'm in a tournament. That don't matter. It's just some jerk, but not because I'm in a tournament.

To be honest I've probably had more conflicts when I've fished not in a tournament then when I was tournament fishing, so I don't think it matters.

Other participants made it clear that they've never had problems with other water users or with riparians.

Most fishermen are talkers. It's common courtesy when you're coming in or going out

to ask about how you did and stuff. So no, I never really ran into any bad problems.

No, never. To be completely honest, everybody who fishes a tournament is in and out like that [finger snap]. If anybody takes time it's their loss.

I've had people come down their dock and ask how I'm doing. I like that. Some people, they like to see what you're catching because they had no idea what was in the lake.

Another participant made it clear that his group considers other user needs when scheduling tournaments.

We [Bass Federation] try not to have two or three clubs at the same boat launch at the same time so we don't tie it up for the public. And if we do have two or three clubs scheduled for that water, then we try to switch them.

Riparians that were interviewed were provided a list of water recreations, including tournament fishing, and asked which, if any, they've had problems with and which one is most problematic. Their experiences confirm what the survey results and tournament participant interviews disclosed—the primary problem is from personal watercrafts and speed boats. It's worth noting, however, that while tournament participants cited confrontations with waterfront property owners, the reverse was not found—riparians that were interviewed did not speak of any personal confrontations with tournament anglers.

Jet skis—going back and forth and back and forth. Not paying any attention to the no-wake zones. They're the biggest problem for me.

And jet skis can be a problem with harassing wildlife. There's wildlife on the water and not all jet skiers but some find the water birds to be a wonderful target to go after.

The big speed boats, like the cigarette boats, they don't even belong on lakes of this size.

There's been a battle between fishermen and other users, skiers, and jet skis. There seems to be an increase of fishermen calling the sheriff using a cell phone because other users getting too close to where they're fishing.

Speaking from an angler's perspective because that's mostly what I do on the water, when you see a speed boat going across the water, they want to go from point A to point B, and they don't care if there are two or three anchored boats in a certain area. They're not going to make a big swing around to avoid the anchored boats and so they go right through or just too close and create a big wake. I often wonder if the operators of these big boats do not fish. It doesn't even enter their minds.

The biggest problem that we have is the visitors. They're coming down to see somebody on the lake, they're bringing their water toys, and launching them. When a visitor comes in they will not go further than line of sight from their home base—the people they're visiting—so the jet skiers go bzzzzz back and forth for a couple of hours. They never venture out further into the lake. So they go back and forth and do all their little tricks and to a degree it can get a little annoying. But that's not every weekend, not every day, so we have this infrequent kind of annoyance coming in.

Etiquette is pretty good among the people that live on the lake. It's more if you have visitors and all of a sudden they're hot-rodding around the lake in ski boats and personal watercrafts.

Participation in Water Recreations

This section reports on the participation in numerous water recreations on Wisconsin waters. Specifically, it reports on the participation in fishing and time and location restrictions for various water recreations.

The questionnaire included a list of 16 recreations occurring on Wisconsin waters. Respondents were asked to indicate which, if any, they participated in during 2006. The mean number of activities participated in by respondents was 3.0; more than one-half (55%) participated in three or more activities.

Fishing was clearly the preferred water recreation both in terms of overall participation and frequency (**Table 22**). Four out of five respondents (80%) said they fished from a boat in 2006; more than one-half (53%) said they fished from the shore or a pier. (When the two are combined, 83% participated in fishing, indicating that respondents are more likely to have done both types of fishing rather than only one type.) As one might expect, of all the listed water recreations respondents said they most frequently participated in fishing (64% total; 60% from a boat and 4% from shore or pier).

Pleasure cruising was the next most common water recreation. Just over one-half (52%) of the respondents said they went pleasure cruising on Wisconsin waters in 2006, and one-fifth of the respondents (19%) did this more than any other water recreation. One-fifth to one-fourth of the respondents reported that in 2006 they went canoeing (25%), towed or rode on a towed toy behind a boat (23%), waterskied or towed water skiers (20%), and went swimming or scuba diving from a boat (20%). All other water recreations were participated in by not more than approximately one respondent in ten (not more than 11%), including riding personal watercrafts such as jet skis (11%).

Table 22. Response of boaters (%) regarding participation in various water activities.

Recreation	Percent participated	Percent most often
Fishing from boat	80%	60%
Fishing from shore/pier	53	4
Pleasure cruising	52	19
Canoeing	25	3
Towing or riding behind boat on towed toys	23	3
Waterskiing or towing water skiers	20	3
Swimming or scuba diving from boat	20	1
Riding personal watercraft	11	2
Kayaking	10	1
Hunting/trapping on water	10	1
Sailing	6	1
On-board overnight mooring	3	<1
Racing	2	<1
Rafting	1	<1
Windsurfing	<1	<1
Something else?	2	<1
Did not participate in any water activities in 2006	5	

NOTE: The 5% responding that they did not participate in any water recreation during 2006 were omitted from inappropriate questions in this section.

Restricting Water Recreations by Time and/or Location

The questionnaire included definitions of restricted use by time and by location. Respondents were then asked to indicate which, if any, of six water recreations should be restricted. Given that nearly one-half or more of the respondents reported problems with water skiers, speed boats, and personal watercrafts, it's not surprising to find that a majority of all respondents believe these three water recreations should be considered for restricted use (Table 23).

Approximately three-fourths (76%) of the respondents said the use of personal watercrafts should be restricted by time of day and/or location on the water. A nearly equal proportion of respondents (72%) felt that speed boating and water skiing should also be restricted.

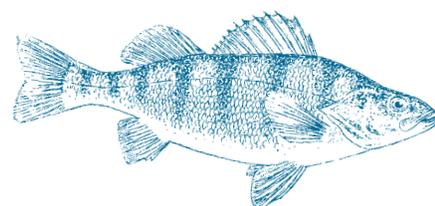
Of particular importance is that a minority of respondents reported that tournament fishing should be restricted by time and/or location (although 48% is a significant minority). A greater proportion of respondents suggested

Table 23. Response of boaters (%) regarding which water recreations should be restricted by time and/or location.

Water activity	Percent no restriction	Percent restrict by time	Percent restrict by location	Percent restrict by time and location
Other fishing	95%	2%	2%	1%
Motor boating or pleasure cruising	79	7	9	5
Tournament fishing	52	12	20	16
Water skiing	28	27	15	30
Speed boating	28	22	20	30
Personal watercraft	24	25	16	35

NOTE 1: Statistical differences were not found between anglers and non-anglers, or between recreation types, or between riparian ownership (respondents who own waterfront property and those who do not).

NOTE 2: More tournament anglers (82%) than general anglers (70%) supported restricted use for waterskiing (chi square = 8.48 3 df, $p < 0.037$).



fishing tournaments be restricted by location (36%) than by time (28%).

A relatively small proportion of respondents said that motorboating or pleasure cruising should be restricted (21%), and the smallest proportion of respondents (5%) thought fishing (non-tournament) should be restricted.

Respondent Background

This section is intended to help understand who responded to the survey. It summarizes respondent gender, age, and watercraft ownership.

Table 24. Respondent gender and age.

Attribute	Percent of total
Gender	
Male	89%
Female	11
Age	
Under 30	5%
30 – 39	12
40 – 49	23
50 – 59	29
60 +	31
Mean age	52 years

Table 24 above shows that the vast majority of the respondents are male (89%). The average age of the respondent is 52, and about three in ten (31%) are at least 60 years old. Non-tournament fishing boats were owned by more respondents (45%) than any other type of watercraft

Table 25. Watercraft owned by respondents.

Watercraft	Percent of total	Percent primary boat
Other fishing boat	45%	32%
Canoe	28	3
Open motor boat 16' and over not specific for fishing	25	17
Pontoon	22	17
Rowboat	20	3
Open motor boat under 16' not specific for fishing	17	9
Bass boat/tournament boat	14	10
Kayak	9	1
Personal watercraft	7	1
Inflatable boat/raft	7	1
Sailboat	6	1
Sailboard	3	<1
Cabin cruiser	2	2
Houseboat	0	0

(**Table 25**). Further, more respondents (32%) selected non-tournament fishing boats as their primary boat, that is, the boat they most often used. Bass boats or other boats used specifically for tournament fishing were owned by approximately one respondent in seven (14%), and 10% of the respondents said their tournament boat was the boat they most often used. It's worth noting that personal watercrafts were owned by only 7% of the respondents and only 1% listed it as their primary watercraft. Yet, in the opinion of the respondents, personal watercrafts were the leading source of user problems on Wisconsin waters (Table 21).

NOTE: As found in the statewide angler survey, males comprise a higher percentage of tournament anglers (98%) than general anglers (87%), and tournament anglers are slightly younger than general anglers. The mean age of the tournament angler is 47, and 44% are at least 50 years old. The mean age of the general angler is 54, and 63% are at least 50 years old. (Differences for gender and age are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.)

Acknowledgements

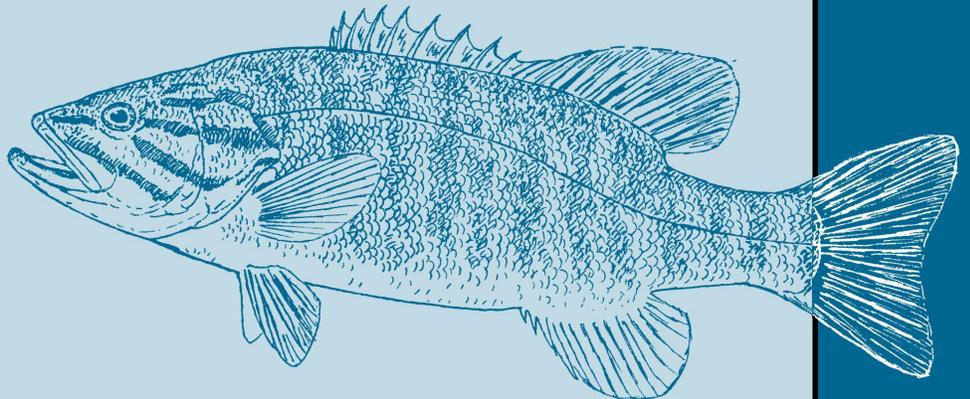
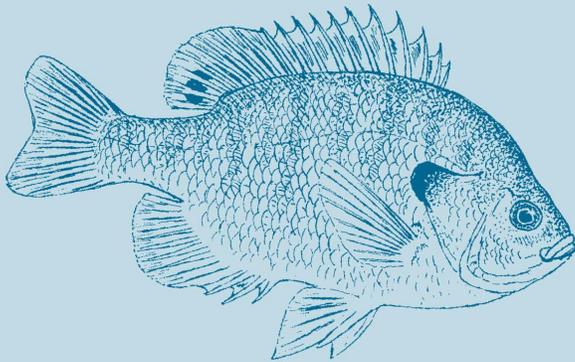
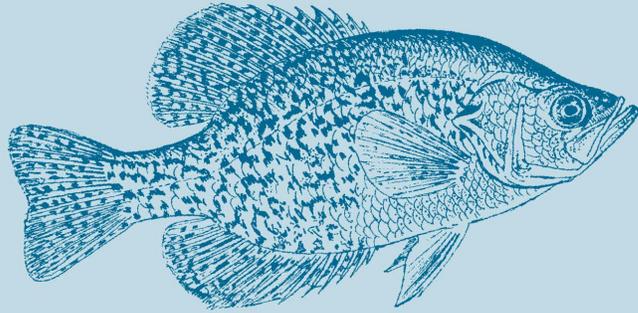
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